

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIMENSION OF EUROPEAN–ALGERIAN COOPERATION IN ADDRESSING TERRORISM

Sahnine Hebri¹

¹Faculty of Law and Political Science, Saida University, Algeria

Sahninehebri20@gmail.com¹

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the frameworks and projects of the European–Algerian partnership within an approach to building cooperative security relations in the field of combating international terrorism, particularly in the security domain, which has been a focus of Mediterranean countries through initiatives within the framework of the European Community’s Mediterranean policy. This policy outlines the Mediterranean dimension in the field of security cooperation to confront terrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, and organized crime in the Mediterranean region. Accordingly, Algeria is considered one of the countries that has suffered the scourge of terrorism, which has enabled it to acquire a significant position and an effective role among Western countries, especially the countries of the European Union. This has allowed it to become a key partner in combating this phenomenon within the framework of cooperation initiatives with European states.

Keywords: Mediterranean dimension, European cooperation, Algeria, addressing terrorism.

Introduction:

Terrorism has constituted a major threat to the European Union, as it has to the world as a whole, especially after the attacks it experienced, which resulted in human and material losses. Some scholars in the security field believe that the European Union has made significant progress in combating terrorism since 2003, following the issuance of the European Union document, through the adoption of numerous measures at both the internal and external levels. Since 2005, the European Union’s strategy has been linked to respect for human rights and the principles of international law. Since terrorism threatens the security of Europe and its neighbors alike, the Union has worked to strengthen cooperation with its partners in the field of combating terrorism, limiting extremism, confronting the financing of terrorism, and combating the movement of organized terrorist groups, especially across borders.

Therefore, the European Union sought to establish relations with neighboring states, considering that its security is linked to them due to geographical proximity, and it has become difficult to separate the national security of one state from that of others. This has driven the European Union to secure its borders, considering this one of the main manifestations of combating threats, foremost among them terrorism. Thus emerged the idea of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of border management. European Union agencies concerned with combating terrorism, as well as the various committees and councils of the Union, have shown interest in developing policies aimed at curbing the terrorist phenomenon, in addition to activating their military strategies and developing their forces to be comprehensive and integrated in their dimensions. Algeria has therefore become a focus of attention for major powers, especially European states, as an effective partner in combating terrorism. To identify the fields and frameworks of Algerian–European cooperation, particularly in combating terrorism, the following research problem is raised:

What are the frameworks of Algerian–European cooperation in combating terrorism in light of the growing new security threats in the Mediterranean region?

To answer this problem, the following questions are posed:

- What are the most important initiatives and agencies of the European Union in combating terrorism, and how do they contribute to addressing and countering terrorism?
- This study is also based on the following central hypothesis: the European–Algerian partnership’s pursuit of implementing successful security and development policies across various fields contributes to achieving security and development in addressing the terrorist phenomenon.

This problem will be addressed through the following axes:

First axis: European Union agencies for combating terrorism.

Second axis: European Union initiatives.

First Axis: European Union Agencies for Combating Terrorism:

The European continent has gone through several stages before reaching the establishment of security and judicial bodies to confront risks and achieve the shared security of the European Union through the following institutional mechanisms:

First: Europol

Europol was established to achieve police cooperation among the Member States in the field of combating crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism, in addition to various international crimes. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 referred to it through Article K1 (9). Thus, the Europol Convention was adopted in implementation of this article in 1995 and entered into force on 01/10/1998. This Convention was later replaced by a decision of the Council of the European Union dated 06/04/2009, establishing the European Police Office (Europol), JHA/371/2009¹.

Some other standard instruments may also be mentioned, including:

- Council of the European Union Decision JHA/934/2009, dated 30/11/2009, adopting the rules governing Europol’s relations with its partners, including personal data and confidential information.
- Council of the European Union Decision JHA/935/2009, dated 30/11/2009, determining the list of other states and organizations with which Europol concludes agreements.
- Council of the European Union Decision JHA/936/2009, dated 30/11/2009, adopting the rules applicable to Europol’s analytical work files.
- Council of the European Union Decision JHA/968/2009, dated 30/11/2009, adopting the rules on the confidentiality of Europol information.

Furthermore, since 01 January 2010, Europol has become a Community Agency (Agence Communautaire) by virtue of a decision of the Justice and Home Affairs Council dated 06/04/2009². Through addressing the normative determinants represented by a set of legal texts governing these mechanisms, attention is drawn to the nature of the cooperation on which the Europol institution is based. Its mission revolves around assisting the Member States of the European Union in the field of prevention and handling of international organized crime and terrorism, in order to ensure the security and protection of European territory. This is achieved through coordinating investigations and inquiries, creating an information bank for the evaluation and centralized use of information, and providing intelligence support in light of the evolving capabilities of criminal groups. Europol maintains a database (base de données) and modern communication channels, such as the mobile office (bureau mobile sur le terrain), which participated in “Athena I7,” an operation in which the Algerian state took part in April 2010, by accompanying Spanish customs authorities, targeting illicit movements of financial liquidity and other activities³.

The national Europol units (UNE – Unités Nationales Europol) are present at the level of each Member State and serve as a link between Europol and the competent authorities of the Member State within the European Union. Through a unified network composed of 145 liaison officers (Officiers de Liaison), permanent coordination is ensured between Europol headquarters in The Hague and the Member States of the European Union⁴.

Europol also hosts liaison officers from ten non-EU states and organizations. In addition, Europol has a liaison officer seconded to Washington, as well as another at Interpol headquarters in the French

city of Lyon⁵, Europol employs personnel from the police, border guards, customs, and intelligence services in a manner that ensures speed, effectiveness, accuracy, and clarity in the exchange of information between states and Europol, and vice versa, based on a multilingual and multicultural approach⁶.

Europol operates within its competencies, which include confronting and combating organized crime, terrorism, illegal migration, as well as other forms of serious crime listed in the annex to the decision establishing Europol mentioned earlier. This facilitates the process of exchange and cooperation among Member States, as Europol collects and analyzes information and informs the competent authorities of the Member States of information relevant to them concerning various criminal activities, thereby facilitating investigations among Member States.

Second: Eurojust:

The Eurojust body was established primarily to keep pace with what is known as the Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice in the European Union. It was created by a decision of the Council of the European Union on 28/02/2002, with the aim of combating all serious forms of crime, strengthening judicial cooperation in this field, and facilitating the coordination of investigative work and judicial proceedings within the territory of the Member States with regard to serious crimes, including money laundering offenses.

Eurojust's competencies cover all types of crime, such as terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, currency counterfeiting, money laundering, cybercrime, and others. Eurojust is considered a specialized agency in all forms of crime within the Euro-Mediterranean area. It also aims to work toward the formation of a highly qualified international professional community of judges, prosecutors, and clerks, in order to achieve justice, develop and mobilize various capacities, and obtain information necessary for cooperation in confronting crimes of all kinds and forms⁷.

The main distinguishing feature of Eurojust is its intergovernmental dimension (La Dimension Intergouvernementale)⁸. It is a body that enjoys legal personality and is composed of a national member seconded from each Member State of the European Union, who must hold the status of a public prosecutor (Procureur), a judge, or a police officer with equivalent powers. Each national member remains subject to the law of their own state with regard to their legal status.

The nature of Eurojust's intervention revolves around investigations (les enquêtes) and prosecutions involving two or more Member States, particularly with regard to criminal conduct related to serious organized crime. Accordingly, the objectives of Eurojust, as set out in Article 3 of the Decision establishing Eurojust (as amended by Council of the European Union Decision No. JAI/426/2009), are as follows:

- Implementing requests for judicial cooperation and the decisions related to this field, particularly those concerning instruments activating the principle of mutual recognition.
- Improving and enhancing coordination among the competent authorities of the Member States with regard to investigations and prosecutions.
- Supporting the competent authorities of the Member States in strengthening the effectiveness of their investigations and prosecutions.

In general, it can be said that Eurojust is a European agency active in the security field and works to combat crime in all its forms by obtaining information and ensuring its transmission to the Member States in order to facilitate the work of judicial bodies⁹.

The announcement of the Eurojust agency was made during a press conference held in a border area between Bulgaria and Turkey, attended by the European Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, Dimitris Avramopoulos, senior Bulgarian officials, delegations from the European Parliament and Turkey, and non-governmental organizations. Accordingly, it is a body that works in cooperation with the Member States to address and identify any potential security threats on the Union's external borders. Commissioner Avramopoulos described this day as historic, stating: "We now have an integrated system based on solidarity and cooperation to deal with any upcoming crisis

and to ensure a higher level of human capacities to guarantee the functioning of the agency. This is the new element of this agency; previously, security was the responsibility of the Member States, whereas today any threat to the borders of a European state is a threat to all states.¹⁰

Third: The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex):

The basic document establishing the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union is Council Regulation No. 2007/2004, dated 26 October 2004. The agency was created to improve the integrated management of the external borders of the Member States of the European Union, with greater focus on migration flows through the monitoring of land and maritime borders of the Member States, as well as their airports and seaports.

According to Article 2 of the aforementioned founding regulation, the tasks of Frontex include the following:

- Coordinating operational cooperation among EU Member States in the field of external border management.
- Assisting Member States in training national border guards, including the establishment of common training standards.
- Conducting analyses and assessments of risks threatening external security.
- Monitoring the development of research related to the surveillance and control of external borders.
- Assisting Member States when they require technical and operational assistance at the external borders.
- Providing Member States with the necessary support in organizing joint return operations.
- Offering technical and operational assistance to border guards through Rapid Border Intervention Teams in cases of significant migratory flows at Europe's external borders¹¹.

It is worth noting, through addressing the European agencies combating the terrorist phenomenon namely Europol, Eurojust, and Frontex that these bodies work to secure borders and combat organized crime in all its forms by providing security for individuals, facilitating their movement, enhancing cooperation in the judicial and police fields, coordinating between them, and planning for the management and administration of border security. They also work to strengthen cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean by supporting participation in the Euro-Mediterranean judicial training project and exchanging information on terrorist groups in order to combat them and restrict their members from carrying out criminal operations.

Second Axis: European Union Initiatives

European states have experienced numerous forms of partnership with Mediterranean countries, stemming from the relations between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, as well as the rules that governed them over past decades, and the derivation of criteria by which this cooperation can be evaluated. The two shores are linked by historical, cultural, political, and economic relations, and at times by relations of conflict and tension. In light of the reconfiguration of the geostrategic situation in the Mediterranean region and efforts to devise solutions to limit or overcome shared risks between Euro-Maghreb states, numerous projects have been proposed to achieve cooperation and partnership instead of conflict and competition between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership project is considered a call to build security, stability, and peace in the Mediterranean region. Accordingly, the Euro-Maghreb initiatives will be addressed as follows:

First: The Barcelona Process (The Barcelona Process):

In light of the developments taking place in the world, all the balances that occur in the Mediterranean region inevitably affect the security of the European Union. This has prompted the Union to strive to influence developments in this region in a manner that safeguards its interests. The Barcelona Process,

also known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, is considered one of the most important, best, and most advanced initiatives. It was agreed to hold the Barcelona Conference at the initiative of France, Spain, and Italy, with the call adopted by the European Commission in Brussels, thus representing a victory for the trend led by France within the Union, as opposed to the trend led by Germany and the United Kingdom, which prioritized orientation toward Eastern European countries. After these efforts by the European Union and following the conviction of the Mediterranean states, the official announcement of the conference was made, scheduled for 27–28/11/1995 in the Spanish city of Barcelona; hence it was named the Barcelona Conference¹².

This initiative encompassed three pillars covering the full range of relations between the European Union and its southern neighbors: political and security partnership, economic and financial partnership, and partnership in social, cultural, and human affairs. The European Union sought to link the participating states in the Barcelona Conference to Western values such as democracy and human rights through the financing of local and regional projects within the framework of the "MEDA I" Action Programme, which began in 1995 as the main EU instrument for implementing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and its activities. It is also considered a budgetary plan used to accompany the process of social and economic reform in the Mediterranean partner countries of Europe.

The legal basis of the "MEDA" programme is the MEDA Regulation issued in 1996 (Council Regulation No. 1488/96), which was amended in 2000 and became known as "MEDA II". This regulation provides for the establishment of a Mediterranean Committee composed of representatives of the EU Member States in order to advise the European Commission regarding the implementation of "MEDA I" and "MEDA II". A cooperation office known as "Euromed" prepares proposals for annual financing plans and manages these programmes from the identification stage through evaluation and implementation. The European Union allocated 4,685 million European Currency Units (ECU) for the period 1995–1999 to implement the agreed areas of cooperation under what became known as the "MEDA I" programme. Among the most important operations that were financed were:

Structural adjustment of the economies of Mediterranean countries, economic transformation and development of the private sector, rural development, and the health and education sectors, and finally regional projects.

The budget of the "MEDA II" program for the period 2000–2006 reached 5,350 million euros, and the volume of credits provided by the European Investment Bank for the years 2000–2007 reached 7.4 billion euros¹³.

Second: The European Neighborhood Policy (The European Neighborhood Policy):

After the European enlargement process in 2004 to include 10 countries, the European Union adopted a new policy whereby relations with the eastern and southern neighboring countries of Europe became at the top of the list of European foreign policy priorities. This policy was called the "European Neighborhood Policy," and thus it defines the role played by European countries in arrangements for building security, stability, and calm, that is, achieving internal security for these countries¹⁴.

The countries included in the European Neighborhood Policy are countries that are not candidates for membership in the European Union. It is based on an important concept, namely "partnership," as an important subject in economic and political thought. The "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Project" is considered the result of the interaction of a set of influential factors that have prevailed in the Mediterranean basin throughout its long history, and this project is also considered a historical reference for the European Neighborhood Policy. From 1995, the European Union launched a new type of relations with the Mediterranean countries, known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, expressed through the so-called Barcelona Conference, which aimed at establishing a free trade area with the countries of the southern Mediterranean by 2010¹⁵.

Hence, it should be noted that the European Union negotiates with the countries concerned by the European Neighborhood Policy on the development of a purposeful and general strategy that includes

a set of priorities to strengthen commitment to shared values, including: promoting democracy, establishing the rule of law, and human rights in their various types and forms.

The European Neighborhood Policy aims to cover four areas of action, as follows:

- Strengthening the rule of law, democracy, and respect for human rights.
- Encouraging economic reforms.
- Promoting employment and social cohesion.
- Cooperation in major foreign policy objectives such as combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

From the European perspective, the European Neighborhood Policy provides a basis for building a mutual commitment to shared values such as: “democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, the principles of a market economy, and sustainable development.”

The European Neighborhood Policy focuses on social integration and democratic reform in neighboring countries as part of the European Union’s strategy to enhance security and stability in neighboring states and to limit the concept of proximity. Security requirements call for multilateral arrangements, which may lead interaction among these states to the establishment of what Karl Deutsch called a “pluralistic security community,” “based on shared agreement on core values within a framework of security interdependence among several states.”¹⁶

The European Neighborhood Policy also aims to:

- Create a prosperous area and shared values based on growing economic integration, intensification of political and cultural relations, strengthening cross-border cooperation, and joint action to avoid conflicts and disputes.
- Provide neighboring countries with gains in terms of political and economic stability.
- Intensify cooperation for the prevention and combating of terrorist threats in their various forms.
- Develop a policy related to legal migration and cross-border movement of persons.
- Address common challenges in the fields of environment, public health, and organized crime.
- Promote socio-economic development between the northern and southern shores¹⁷.

Third: The Union for the Mediterranean (Union For The Mediteranean):

The European Union’s insistence on contributing to arrangements related to the Mediterranean region led it to adopt, on 13 July 2008, a project that complements the Barcelona Process. This project was proposed by the former French president “Nicolas Sarkozy” during his electoral campaign, and during his tour of French cities he delivered a speech in the city of Toulon overlooking the Mediterranean on 07/02/2007¹⁸, in which he spoke about reunification in the Mediterranean region, focusing on the concept of shared development¹⁹.

The former French president “Nicolas Sarkozy” also considered the Union for the Mediterranean project necessary in view of several objective reasons, the most important of which are:

- The failure of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue that was launched in Barcelona in 1995.
- The limitation of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to trade, excluding all other fields.
- The Barcelona Process taking on the character of a North–South dialogue, which deepened disparities and contradictions between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the northern and the southern.

Accordingly, in his call to build the Union for the Mediterranean, “Sarkozy” focused on the European countries overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, such as: France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Cyprus, in addition to the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, namely: Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. His idea was to replicate the experience of European unity, which began with a small number of states and with specific utilitarian projects²⁰.

A meeting was held in Rome on 20/12/2008 between the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, the Spanish Prime Minister “Zapatero,” and the Italian Prime Minister “Romano Prodi,” which was devoted to discussing the general outlines of the Union for the Mediterranean project. This meeting

constituted a prominent milestone, as it concluded with a joint press conference during which what was called the “Rome Call for the Union for the Mediterranean” was launched, which included the ideas and objectives of the desired project, represented in the following:

- Establishing a balanced partnership based on equality among the partner states, to become a driving force for Mediterranean cooperation without leading to financial integration.
- Ensuring that the “Union for the Mediterranean” project is presented as a complement to the mechanisms of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.
- Establishing peace and development between the two shores of the Mediterranean.
- Seeking to restore the Mediterranean basin to its former status as a region of prosperity, progress, peace, and tolerance, and as the cradle of culture and civilization.
- Extending an invitation to the heads of state of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries to attend a summit hosted by Paris on its national day, 14/07/2008, bringing them together with the heads of state of the European Union member countries, over which France assumed the rotating presidency starting on 01/07/2008²¹.

The statement signed by 43 representatives, aimed at collective cooperation among the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, is in fact a version of the Barcelona Declaration, as it reflects a firm commitment in favor of peace, democracy, regional stability, and security through regional cooperation and integration. This represents a continuation of the Barcelona Process, but through different methods and means. Among the most important points referred to within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean initiative were:

- Condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations through the establishment of legal frameworks to combat terrorism and to fight the factors that contribute to its spread.
- Supporting the Israeli–Palestinian peace process and the negotiations between Syria and Israel.
- Preventing nuclear proliferation, weapons of mass destruction, and even conventional weapons.
- Promoting democracy, pluralism, and respect for human rights, including economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights, with respect for minorities and cultural dialogue, in addition to supporting the role of women in society²².

It is worth noting the position of the German Chancellor “Angela Merkel” regarding the Union for the Mediterranean initiative, namely the initial project of the former French president “Nicolas Sarkozy,” which was limited to the coastal states bordering the Mediterranean.

Expressing her view, she stated: “I view these ideas of the Mediterranean project with skepticism, as they could pose a threat to the entity of the European Union in the long term, which may lead to the disintegration of the European Union,” adding: “This would create a dangerous situation whereby Germany might turn toward Central and Eastern Europe, while France would turn toward the Mediterranean, which would result in undesirable tension.”²³

Germany and Britain also believe that this project serves France’s interests in expanding its influence and revitalizing its economy by securing profitable contracts for French companies in the Mediterranean region. Moreover, the project would lead to divisions within the European Union, as each state would end up pursuing its own independent policy²⁴.

As for the southern Mediterranean countries, some initially welcomed the project, such as Libya under the leadership of the late President Muammar Gaddafi, who, before the French National Assembly, took the French initiative seriously. In March 2008, he stated to the Libyan News Agency that the idea of establishing real cooperation among countries bordering a single sea, such as the Mediterranean Sea, was an idea worthy of support. However, by the end of March, he issued statements opposing the idea of the Union for the Mediterranean entirely and called on the Arab Summit convened in Syria to search for an alternative, which lies in the establishment of an Arab–African union.

The Moroccan position was expressed in a speech by the King of Morocco on 23/10/2007 before the former French president “Nicolas Sarkozy,” in which he stated: “The European Union’s

Neighborhood Policy has strengthened Morocco's hopes of achieving an advanced status by giving our relations with the European Union the strategic dimension they deserve. This ambitious project will consolidate our country's leading role in bringing together the two shores of the Mediterranean. This legitimate ambition has always received support through France's constant participation in the work of the European Union, and we are convinced that the forthcoming French presidency of the European Union will contribute positively to achieving this goal.²⁵

As for the Algerian position, we find that the former late president "Abdelaziz Bouteflika" affirmed that there are obstacles that must be overcome, mentioning in particular the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Western Sahara issue, and that there must be coherence between the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Algerian president stated on 14/12/2007 before Sarkozy: "I know, Mr. President, that you are promoting the project of the Union for the Mediterranean, to which you devote yourselves and which you strongly and optimistically advocate. We have discussed it, and in Algeria we tend to contribute to its realization, to the extent that we must define its components and objectives, as well as the place it will occupy alongside the mechanisms that already exist and that have brought together the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean."²⁶

These projects undertaken by European countries reflect, on the one hand, the importance of regional cooperation among the countries of the Mediterranean Sea, and on the other hand, the European Union's effort to employ these various projects within a comprehensive and purposeful strategy to confront American projects such as the "Greater Middle East," thereby keeping the region within its sphere of influence. In reality, we find that the Union for the Mediterranean project proposes a restructuring of the Barcelona Process, which seeks to create a common area of peace and stability. For example, Europe needs to ensure security from uncontrolled migration from the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea²⁷.

Conclusion:

Practical reality has proven that terrorism constitutes a security threat, especially in light of the increasing number of terrorist operations and the serious repercussions they entail for international peace and security. It must therefore be condemned and addressed through the adoption of a Euro-Algerian approach, in the presence of a strong will to achieve partnership within the framework of the Neighborhood Policy and to strengthen the protection of Mediterranean security against risks and threats.

In summary, the European policies adopted to confront these threats, foremost among them terrorism, are both limited and complex at the same time. The European Union does not seek to address any challenge unless its political interests are at stake, meaning that it does not act seriously unless the challenges pose a direct threat to its security. It can be said that the European Union's strategy in combating international terrorism, and even in achieving political stability in several countries, remains unclear due to the lack of an effective institutional structure, a common foreign policy, and the existence of multiple initiatives which, although differing in objectives, converge in substance to affirm European interests. One should therefore not overlook the hidden objectives it seeks to achieve by exploiting issues of democracy and human rights to serve its own interests in the southern Mediterranean region. The European Union, like the United States of America, adopts a double-standards approach by allying itself with regimes that it simultaneously accuses of dictatorship, while labeling other regimes that threaten its interests as terrorist.

As for the Maghreb countries, which still face the challenges of globalization and seek to benefit from international competition over the region, they must intensify efforts to strengthen economic integration and stimulate trade among themselves, in order to benefit from the experiences of other countries that have witnessed major progress in various fields, to emerge from the dark tunnel, and to achieve genuine takeoff through mutual cooperation.

Finally, there are regional challenges manifested in numerous asymmetric security threats that have come to endanger both shores of the Mediterranean, alongside the continued flow of irregular

migrants from North Africa to Europe and the rise of violence and extremism in European countries. Through this study, it appears that the Mediterranean dimension of Algerian–European relations in the field of counterterrorism requires reconsideration of common issues and mutual cooperation that serves the interests of the peoples of the region, while limiting the spread of terrorism and religious extremism. This also entails re-examining many forms of partnership proposed within the framework of shared regional security, away from self-interest, and intensifying international and regional efforts to address and confront the phenomenon of terrorism in a more effective manner and through mutual security cooperation.

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