

LA UNIÓN EUROPEA ANTE LOS OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE DE LA AGENDA 2030

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Foreword

It is an honour for me to write the foreword to this Pocket Book, which is published by way of proceedings of an academic and informative initiative to promote European debate under the title “Jean Monnet Module: The EU and the Mediterranean in light of the Global EU Security Strategy: Future challenges in neighbourhood, security and defence policies, ThEUMed”.

The publication being presented today gathers and puts into context the results of this initiative, approved by the European Commission for the period 2017-2020, with activities centred on the southern area of the EU. Each year, the Module has consisted of a 60-hour intensive course and two other activities, an Annual Conference and a Round Table.

The aim of these activities is to provide students from the Complutense University of Madrid and other foreign universities, as well as other academic institutions, professionals and members of civil society with specialised knowledge and training focused on the analysis of the European Union’s cooperation policy with the Mediterranean, both on the eastern and southern flanks. In addition, it has intentionally sought to encourage networking among participants and open up lines of debate and research on the role of the European Union in the area.

However, the main target audience has been young professionals, providing a learning and enrichment framework for student researchers and professionals in the field of analysis of EU policy and its role in the Mediterranean, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the links between the EU and the Southern Neighbourhood, with a special focus on the European Neighbourhood Policy and the impact of energy supply and the environment on security and defence.

In this regard, I would like to underline the relevance of the three round tables organised in recent years in the context of this initiative. This year on the European Union in times of disinformation and COVID-19. In 2019 on developments and obstacles in the European security and defence policy and their impact on the defence industry. And in 2018 on Algeria's political and economic evolution since the presidency of Houari Boumediene and its impact on relations with Europe.

In addition to the core academic team, other leading academics, military personnel, experts, politicians and opinion leaders participated in these activities, creating a critical mass of practical experience that has made it possible to address the complex state of affairs of the European construction process, its major debates and uncertainties.

The book being presented aims, through the dissemination of the results of the Module's main activities, to draw the attention of EU policy-makers to the EU's southern border, promoting the strengthening of a common understanding among its Member States on southern issues and with the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, addressing new common challenges in the fields of international cooperation and security and defence in the area.

The book brings together the reflections of the main members of the project's academic team in four main thematic blocks: The thematic block on security and defence was led by Professor Francisco Aldecoa and other invited experts; The second thematic block, led by Professor María Isabel Nieto, is devoted to the European Neighbourhood Policy, in relation to both the eastern flank and the southern dimension, with the collaboration of experts and specialists; The third block on energy security is written by Professor Soledad Segoviano; The fourth block on the environment and the fight against climate change was delivered by Professor Xira Ruiz.

The book contains the papers of these four authors and two communications of the work of two excellent students of the course, Jan Pomes and David Heis Mandelweit.

It is no secret that the European Union is going through moments of uncertainty that could well drive European construction towards more union or towards less cohesion. There are both reasons for optimism and the opposite in the air since, considering the obvious existential uncertainty, the reasons for this situation and its possible future evolution are unclear. The document being presented today provides insight into this issue.

In my opinion, the ultimate reason for the problems currently facing the European Union stems from the necessary readjustment of the European project to the era of globalisation. It is clear that the European Union is the instrument best adapted to the complexities and uncertainties of this turbulent 21st century world. The basic question is not *What* but *How*. It seems as though some major mistakes have been made in the EU enlargement process. Seen in perspective, a firm commitment to the political process underlying the European Union should have been an absolute requirement for new members.

My personal experience on the ground allows me to affirm that this commitment to political construction has not been properly explained to the Public Opinion in new member countries and that these political features of the project have been allowed to be relativised even in the public opinion of the most senior partners. The result, in my view, is that the essential elements of the European project have been blurred through increasingly and essentially divergent national agendas. This is, in my view, a posthumous triumph for British positions and a depth charge on the European Union's waterline.

In all the various issues facing European construction, what remains essential, today as yesterday, is the federal political horizon, which drives and structures the project. The feeling is

that this is not crystal clear, especially with some partners. This drift is a guarantee of problems and discord, because without a commonly accepted political horizon, no European Union is possible. There will undoubtedly be trade agreements, but without the driving core of political ambition there is no project.

The topics developed by the authors of the book include the direct derivatives of this political ambition. Because from this ambition derives the need to convert the EU into a global actor, or the requirement for strategic autonomy or the development of a Common Security and Defence Policy. The EU, in its coming of age, sees the features that must convert it into a strategic actor in a world that must be multipolar, because the alternative is Europe's irrelevance and, in the medium term, the very failure of the European project.

As mentioned earlier, I believe that a strong EU, a global power, is our best tool in the age of globalisation. The question is how to move it forward in view of the mistakes that have been made, which have essentially arisen from a superficial relativisation of the political core of the project in the eyes of public opinion. The answer can only be Reinforced Cooperation, which is intended in principle for the ancillary, but which must be activated for the essential.

This is the reading that I believe should be made of the substance of the discussions at the European Council of 17-20 July. Despite the final agreement, which is very important for the EU's own future, we should not overlook the substance of the existential disagreements between Member States.

It is true that, for the first time, federalising elements appear in the final agreement, but it is advisable to be cautious and to set aside unrealistic triumphalism. Thus, it has become clear that, despite the driving force of the Big Four -Germany, France, Spain and Italy- and the minimal consensus, the lack of references to the

essence of the political project is concerning, which leads me to the conclusion that the future lies in reinventing the EU through a hard core open to future incorporations, in which political ambition is clear as a horizon.

If we focus on EU action in the Mediterranean area, which is the pivotal theme of this publication, it must be acknowledged that the road to refocusing the EU towards the south will still be long and thorny. It is, however, an existential initiative for the future of the European Union itself.

The book provides an excellent analysis of the EU's southward orientation based on a thorough understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the EU institutions to exercise relevant action in the area.

The chapter on European Security and Defence in the light of the EU's Global Strategy, written by Professor Francisco Aldecoa, rightly puts the spotlight on a key issue in the EU's relations with the South. Because the EU's major external challenges are essentially security-related and come from the South. We refer here to the burning issues of migration, organised crime or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Historically, these challenges have been addressed from the perspective of cooperation for development and in a dispersed manner. Perhaps the time has come for a coordinated security response that brings together all the instruments of the EU and its member States in this endeavour. Therefore, the answer to the question posed in Professor Aldecoa's chapter on whether the EU should pursue a security approach in the Mediterranean with "soft or hard power" instruments is clear.

In the 21st century, all State instruments must be brought to the table in a coordinated manner to achieve the complex goal of regional security. Thus, in view of the scale of the risks and threats facing us, it is better to forget the exclusive definitions of

the European Union as a “Civilian Power” or “Normative Power”, which some of my colleagues vehemently maintain and which are intended to mean “Non-Military Power” in the classical sense. I have argued more than once that the EU will either be a full power or none at all, and this assertion requires addressing two essential aspects.

The first, as years of action in the Mediterranean and Africa have shown, is that it is impossible to imagine a secure EU without secure southern borders. And the southern border today is in the Sahel and in Africa as a whole. The European Union would therefore be well advised to have the civilian and military means, the political will to use them and the command and control capacity to intervene effectively in the South.

But it is also impossible to continue to accept as possible the incoherence of assuming that defence itself remains in the hands of an organisation external to the Union itself. European defence architecture is a central issue that should be analysed in detail in future monographic publications, because it seems to me that there are substantial inconsistencies in the air regarding this issue, such as affirming that the one’s own security can be outsourced to third parties without direct consequences for one’s own sovereignty.

The European neighbourhood policy, to which Professor María Isabel Nieto devotes her chapter, plays an essential role in the South. It is no secret that the EU’s image as a besieged fortress is incompatible with its mere survival in a globalised world. Therefore, the neighbourhood policy, far beyond border requirements, must move towards a genuine and perfectly coordinated development cooperation as a key instrument for our own future.

There is no doubt that the energy security aspects, analysed with precision by Professor Soledad Segoviano, are also presented as the driving force behind North-South relations. Indeed, energy

issues have been at the root of many of the conflicts of recent decades. In the case of the Mediterranean and the relations between the northern and southern shores, energy is presented to us as a structuring element, which should be one of cooperation and fundamental agreements, given the strategic nature of this factor for the economies of all the countries in the area.

Therefore, the common interest in a peaceful and fair exploitation of North African countries' natural resources and distribution networks should be reason enough for deep cooperation between the EU and its southern neighbourhood. It is clear to everyone that there is a real interest in the energy security of energy production and transport, which should not be limited to the mere protection of facilities, but rather be embedded in a framework of global development cooperation.

The challenge here is not so much to protect gas or oil flows to Europe, but to develop initiatives that promote economic and social development in the South in pursuit of regional stability and a narrowing of the North-South divide that is at the root of the tragedy of uncontrolled migration. In this respect, I advocate a partnership towards the South, in economic terms, but also and above all in terms of security. The energy aspects should be integrated with those of development cooperation, environment and security in order to imagine a healthy and forward-looking relationship around the Mediterranean.

And it is no coincidence that the fourth part of this work is devoted to another very important issue in the EU's relations with the South. Professor Xira Ruiz develops the topic of the environment, linked to climate change, which is an issue with profound repercussions in the southern EU countries, but with dramatic consequences for the EU's southern neighbours. This is the third element of the insecurity bomb that is building up on our southern border and to which the EU will need to pay due attention in the coming years. The combination of demographics,

climate change and economic disaster on the EU's southern border presents us with a challenge that needs to be addressed urgently and energetically.

And that is perhaps the greatest responsibility of Spanish analysts. Bringing to all EU member countries a deep understanding of the South and promoting concerted action, using the right mix of instruments, to respond to present and future challenges.

The aim of the “Jean Monnet Module: The EU and the Mediterranean in light of the Global EU Security Strategy: Future challenges in neighbourhood, security and defence policies, TheEUmed” during these three years of activities and of the Pocket Book being presented today has been precisely to draw attention to the problems of the South, as part of the general problems of the European project in the 21st century, and to involve new professionals in these issues. Time will tell whether this has been achieved, as only time can judge whether the EU is able to adapt to the new times.

And for me, adapting means returning to the essence of the project, which is none other than shared sovereignties because, in the complex world of globalisation, the dimensions of our nation-states converts us into the toys of powerful forces beyond our control. The answer can only be an increase in political size and policies adapted to the new times.

The dilemma is therefore clear: either shared sovereignty or no sovereignty at all. Which in colloquial terms means either strong EU politics or being swept away by the winds of history. Can we imagine the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent economic crisis without the EU? Can we imagine our country, Spain, isolated in the tempestuous world of the 21st century without the EU, or in a weak EU? I leave the answer up to the reader.

*Lieutenant General (Res.) Rubén García Servet
Madrid, 29 July 2020*