

# The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Terrorism

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In 1995, the European Union and twelve Mediterranean countries declared their intention to work together in order to find ways of safeguarding the security and stability of the region. The resulting Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) gave rise to great hopes.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, terrorism emerged as one of the areas of great concern for all parties involved. The EMP's code of conduct against terrorism, however, which was recently agreed by all EMP countries was a source of deep disappointment. A different, more practical approach is needed in order to counter the threat effectively.

First, though, what's wrong with the EMP's approach? Six years have gone by since the declaration of the war on terrorism – six years in which the debate about terrorism has moved on considerably. The EMP, in its document, should have gone beyond 'condemnation' and 'determination' – it should have spelled out a clear and practical vision for how terrorism should be fought.

Notwithstanding the welcome emphasis on international cooperation as well as the endorsement of human rights, it would have been imperative for the EMP to come up with a 'tailored' response that takes into consideration the specific conditions of the Mediterranean region.

Unfortunately, the EMP's failure to produce a meaningful agenda in the fight against terrorism confirms the sceptics, who have suggested that it is unrealistic to expect a common policy on such a sensitive issue. However, there is no single country in the partnership that has not yet suffered from terrorism directly or indirectly. The need to counter terrorism has been recognised as essential by every country involved. Indeed, everyone believes it is essential to protect countries' critical infrastructure, including transport, telecommunications and energy, but also food, water, and medical facilities.

Simply put, there are a whole series of sectors that could be severely disrupted by well-targeted terrorist attacks, particularly if they were to happen in several member states simultaneously. Whatever the political differences between countries, there is a strong and enduring imperative for cooperation, which the EMP should live up to.

What exactly, then, should we expect? If the EMP is to succeed in enabling its governments to stop terrorism, it needs

to address terrorism as well as the causes of terrorism. It must recognise the link between stability, development and justice. And it must consider issues like poverty, oppression, occupation, and respect for religion. In fact, the EMP could best deal with terrorism by distinguishing between different levels. The EMP's document acknowledges the need for terrorism analysis to be conducted at various levels, but it does not specify strategies that would put this idea into practice. The document does not even attempt to develop an integrated framework for the analysis of the causes of terrorism.

What elements and principles should form the basis of the EMP's counter-terrorism strategy? First, it should be clear that, in the fight against terrorism, national agencies must continue to lead, that is to say, national governments and EMP member states should keep full control over their police forces, their security and intelligence agencies and their judicial authorities.

Second, while countries' sovereignty should remain intact, there need to be practical action plans to facilitate cooperation between member states. Examples include structures in which police forces cooperate; where investigating judges and prosecutors work together; where intelligence and security services formulate joint analyses; and where border forces in EMP share best practices

Thirdly, cooperation between the EMP and other regional organisations in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere need to be strengthened. This includes, first and foremost, the United Nations, but also NATO, the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. But the EMP should also work closely with the United States, Russia, countries in the Balkans, as well as with countries east to the Mediterranean, as well as providing counter-terrorism assistance to countries such as Iraq.

The central role in the fight against terrorism, however, continues to lie with national authorities. The more they do to improve internal coordination – for example, between police forces, intelligence agencies, the border and judicial authorities – the easier regional coordination will become.

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