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SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND ECONOMIC  
INTEGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

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*Social Representations and Economic Integration in the Mediterranean Area*

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## **Abstract**

Do social representations affect the efficiency of economic policy? To deal with this problem I studied the limited results of European Policy toward the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area. While the classical approach to economic integration explains this failure mainly as a consequence of the political and economical costs perceived by the partners, I paid attention to the role of two adversarial social representations: the clash of civilizations and the encounter of civilizations. Both of them underestimate and overestimate some characteristics of the Mediterranean Area, hindering the comprehension of regional reality, while the interaction between them nullify the possibility of benefit of the EU Mediterranean economic policy.

## **Keywords**

Euro Mediterranean Free Trade Area, European Union integration policy, cognitive disincentives to economic cooperation.



## **Introduction\***

When, in 1995, the European Union launched the project of creating a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area, the differences between the two rims of the internal sea were notable: there were different economic structures, different levels of natural resources, different patterns of population growth, different levels of education, different government systems, different levels of wellness, different patterns of unemployment and poverty, and different stages of diffusion of technologies and communication medias.<sup>1</sup> Concerning economic integration in the area, in MPCs there were a high level of dependency on foreign trade, especially on EU trade flows,<sup>2</sup> while the total share of foreign direct investment was really quite low: about 1% of world FDI.

In addition, not all of the countries participating in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership were members of the major international economic organizations, like the WTO, OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and NATO. Some Arabic Countries were involved in important Islamic organizations like the Arab League. Moreover, the two Mediterranean shores featured different religions that, though they have common roots, recognize each other as opposites. Even if distinctions have to be made, the Mediterranean societies were effectively different as regards the function of women and family and religion's role in the government system.

The development model implemented by MPCs starting in the 1950s for the purpose of improving the economic and social performances was founded on public intervention, a less advanced service sector and oil incomes. It produced a level of growth incapable of generating sufficient jobs. The major international organizations, then, like the WTO and EU, suggested the adoption of a new development strategy that would have encouraged international integration and occupational growth through private investments, the dynamic sectors and foreign trade development.<sup>3</sup>

In the following pages, I will explain the EU policies applied in this context on the basis of this development strategy and the corresponding results after almost twenty years of implementation. Then, in the second section, I will speak about the theoretical context that gave me the opportunity to link some social representations to the economic problems. Finally, I will interpret the scant results of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area with reference to the role of social representations.

## **1. The implementation of EMFTA: which results?**

### ***The Euro-Mediterranean Policies***

Even if it is not the aim of this paper to consider in depth the relationship between the EU and each Mediterranean partner country during more than twenty years of interventions, we can briefly note the large array of instruments and the fluctuations of EU policy toward its Mediterranean periphery. Starting in 1995, a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was created in Barcelona, joining together all of the Mediterranean neighbors except for Balkans, to which another cooperation program was dedicated,

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<sup>1</sup> The only exception in such a division was Israel. It is possible to explore further these data in: ANIMA-MIPO, 2008; IE Med, 2008; Norton, 2008; Xenakis & Chryssochoou, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> While the MPCs imported a significant amount of food products, especially from Europe, the export structure was based primarily on oil income. Then, the textile and clothes sectors accounted for a significant part of the exports.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. EuropeanParliament, P6\_TA(2007)006 Euro-Med Free Trade Area, 2007-03-15;

and Libya, which had participated to the periodic conventions as an observer, not having accepted all the clauses of the Barcelona Agreement.<sup>4</sup> In 2004, this partnership merged into the Neighborhood Policy, a new instrument created to homogenize and make more coherent the EU financial interventions in its Eastern and Southern periphery. Later, in 2008, a new framework was created to give new direction to the Barcelona Process: the Union for the Mediterranean. The intent was to insist on the regional dimensions of the Mediterranean cooperation, avoiding limiting the process to the bilateral level of interaction.

Despite this recent evolution in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the basic strategies have remained more or less the same, addressing three key aspects: *the political and security aspect*, which aims to establish a common area of peace and stability; *the economic and financial aspect*, which hopes to allow the creation of an area of shared prosperity; and *the social, cultural and human aspect*, which aims to develop human resources and promote understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies.<sup>5</sup>

In the economic context, the principal goal of the partnership was the realization of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area (EMFTA) by 2010, meant to “create an area of shared stability”<sup>6</sup>, the benefits of which would be experimented by both the Mediterranean rims. In summary, the opinion of the principal EU consultants was that an efficient free trade area applied to all trade relations would bring to the European Member States geo-strategic stability, provide raw materials, ensure enterprise growth and create the opportunity to export technologies and investments to the South<sup>7</sup>; on the side of the MPCs, economic integration would mean a potential consumer market and the development of a modern and competitive business system thanks to European infrastructures and knowledge. Moreover, for both Mediterranean rims, the EMFTA could mean combating the expanding phenomenon of international competition.

This approach is called a “low politics strategy” in the literature and is found in the movement of market dynamics that can be used as democratization forces, thanks to the spill-over effects that are transmitted to society. When political consensus exists, free trade and economic liberalization can positively affect investments. These, then, can stimulate export income, improve commercial balances, and reduce foreign debt. Thank to these results, it is thought possible to enhance political and social stability and strengthen incentives through political liberalization and transition to democracy.<sup>8</sup>

These expected results are based on the idea that economic complementarities do exist in the Mediterranean region that should be improved to create greater prosperity, wellness and co-development.<sup>9</sup> So, the aim of the EU was to create a “Euro-Mediterranean productive area” to which it

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<sup>4</sup> The Barcelona Process, then, joined together: EU, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. EuropeanCommission, 2005b, p. 1. Although, as we said, the core of EU strategy didn't change substantially, analyzing the EU legal production about the economic dimension of the Partnership the successive evolutions of the Mediterranean cooperation seem to be motivated by four principal themes: the need of a better involvement of MPCs' territories in the definition of development strategies; the need for improving the efficiency and efficacy of the economic interventions through a better programming and monitoring; the necessity of guaranteeing a multilateral and regional approach to the area; the need for overcoming the division between internal and external EU affairs.

<sup>6</sup> EuropeanCommission, 1996, p.1/9

<sup>7</sup> It is also important to remember that the EU needs to control immigration and to secure the region guaranteeing a peaceful periphery. Both of these goals should have been reached by means of the diffusion of free market.

<sup>8</sup> This strategy is based on the experiences that European Union gained during the years of integration policy as directed toward its present member states, particularly Portugal, Spain, Greece, Eastern Europe, Malta and Cyprus. (Marengo, 2004)

<sup>9</sup> Two of the sectors more involved in the creation of these opportunities are the textile and clothes industry and the agro-food industry, sectors in which a relevant number of Mediterranean enterprises from both shores are committed. In addition, these two sectors in the whole region are threatened by the same challenges coming from inexpensive Chinese

might progressively apply a unique industrial policy, in which industrial output and job levels could be maintained through research, innovation and cooperation programs and in which inclusive and structured regional policies should be used to promote the region as one integrated and productive area.<sup>10</sup>

To put this program into action the EU gives priority to three goals: 1) the implementation of liberal reforms in MPCs in order to bring the economic and social systems of the two rims closer together; 2) the progressive trade liberalization of the industrial, agricultural and service sectors, with the abolition of both formal and informal barriers to commerce and the consequent homogenization of rules and custom controls; 3) the deepening of trade relations *between* MPCs by the means of a customs union, thought by EU to be capable of strengthening the competitiveness of national production groups, promoting economies of scale and attracting more foreign investments.<sup>11</sup>

In applying this process, the EU recognized that many SMEs in the MPCs might suffer as a result of the lower protection stemming from market openness, with harmful consequences for jobs and social stability. Thus, the EU had also financed different programs to minimize the controversial social and economic effects that it was thought might derive from the implementation of the described reforms.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the EU believed that commercial openness in itself could mitigate the negative repercussions of the structural adjustments through the diffusion of new economic opportunities and advantages. The extension of the benefits of the economic and social European model would have compensated the MPCs for the efforts required of them.<sup>13</sup>

(Contd.)

products. Moreover, contrary to the energy sector, the enterprises committed in these sectors are preeminently SMEs, employing about 40% of total MPCs occupation, mainly women, which could mean the realization of a more diffused and participated development. For the textile and clothing sector cf. EuropeanUnion, 2004, all the documents, and CounciloftheEuropeanUnion, 2007-11-5, p. 9. For the agro-food sector cf. IE Med, 2008, p. 241-42.

<sup>10</sup> EuropeanCommission, 2005b, p.1. In the EU's opinion, the textile and agro-food sectors, for example, would experience different social and economic advantages by the economic integration of the Mediterranean rims thanks to an advantageous mix of commercial preferences, geographical proximity to Europe, cheap labor, and the possibility of obtaining a high-quality product thanks to diffuse work skills and the presence of European funds.

<sup>11</sup> With regard to the first goal, the implementations of liberal reforms in MPCs to more closely integrate the economic and social systems of the two rims, the EU interventions were based on MPCs' "adjustment and modernization of economic and social structures, giving priority to the promotion and development of the private sector, the upgrading of the productive sector and the establishment of an appropriate institutional and regulatory framework for a market economy". (European Commission, 2005b, p.3). Therefore, this goal should have also meant to reform private, public and commercial law and banking and financial sector on the basis of the protection of free competition. In addition, it should have meant the promotion of a trained entrepreneurial class by means of a reformed educational system. Concerning the second goal, the progressive trade liberalization of the industrial, agricultural and service sectors, the FTA process required the abolition of both formal barriers to commerce (like customs duties) and informal ones, with the progressive standardization of regulations, rules and controls. This homogenization was to progressively eliminate "obstacles to direct foreign investment" and encourage "internal savings in order to support economic development" for both the industrial and service sectors and the financial, banking, sanitarian sectors. (Ibidem). The goal of free trade with and among partner countries would also require further legislative approximation in fields such as company law, accounting and auditing rules. It required a comprehensive prudential regulatory framework combined with efficient and independent supervisory bodies in the area of financial services. In addition, partners needed to be encouraged to enforce regulations regarding competition through independent competition authorities to ensure that companies were able to operate on a level playing field and the non-discriminatory treatment of investors. Finally, convergence towards comparable approaches and definitions, increased transparency in the tax system, and legislative approximation of anti-trust and state aid regulations were needed to advance towards convergence with the Internal Market. (European Parliament, 2007-03-15). The third goal of the Economic Pillar of the Barcelona Process concerns the economic integration of MPCs. The EU believes, according to the economic integration theory, that one of the principal obstacles to MPC growth is the limited dimension of their internal markets. It was hoped that deeper trade relations, then, could create for these developing countries an export market that was simultaneously wider and protected from international competition. Thanks to these characteristics, the MPCs were expected to attract more foreign investments.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBO6KIL8x\\_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBO6KIL8x_4)

<sup>12</sup> The financial aids, however, should have directly linked to the progressive realization of the asked reforms.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. EuropeanCommission, 2003-03-11

## Results

In this paragraph we will analyze the results of the policy described, pointing the attention on the three basic goals that should have been realized through the Euro-Mediterranean economic integration: the liberalization and the integration of markets, the realization of liberal reform in MPCs and the deepening of trade relations *between* MPCs.

From the first point of view, during the last twenty years, the international commercial integration of the Mediterranean Area has improved in line with international tendencies. In addition, the macroeconomic data seem to demonstrate that Europe and its southern neighbors entered in a weak pattern of convergence beginning in 2000. Every year, the MPCs show a 1% GDP per head bigger than Europe.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, as regards trade integration, the MPCs are still highly dependent on foreign trade, their export structures are still very poorly diversified and they remain specialized in sectors that add little in the way of growth.<sup>15</sup> Concerning world FDI, these figures have grown constantly thanks to long-period determinants: oil incomes, proximity to Europe, a booming Turkish economy, and the realization of the MPCs' market potential. Nonetheless, the FDI flows to the region is one third of the average level reached by the world, representing less than 1% of GDP, while in Eastern Asia the level was 3% and in Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa the level is 2.5%. In addition, even if the European Union is one of the most important investors in the region, the proportion of European FDI invested in its Mediterranean neighbors during this period has been extremely low compared with the investment flows in other regional integrated areas, such as US investments in Mexico and Japan investments in the Asian periphery.<sup>16</sup> EU investments in the Mediterranean area have also been low in comparison with the European investments in other parts of the world.<sup>17</sup>

From the point of view of trade liberalization, free movement has been achieved only in industrial goods, while the service sector and agricultural and fisheries products remain full of formal and informal barriers. This partial openness has not properly compensated the MPC efforts made in implementing the requested liberal reforms, the second goal of the Euro-Mediterranean economic integration process.

Regarding the latest point, in fact, the realization of the liberal reforms in MPCs has also been not significant. Indeed, the private and public law is still far to complete the liberal transformation asked by the EU. Moreover, some analysts underline the discrepancy between financial commitments and real expenditures. This element is taken as evidence of the MPCs' limited capacity to exploit EU opportunities, essentially because of a lack of programming and monitoring capacity and the inefficiency of MPC public administration.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it is important to look at the third goal of the EU intervention in the Mediterranean region, the improvement of economic cooperation between MPCs. Slow but steady advances have been made

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<sup>14</sup> However, with an average GNP per head of 6,209 US dollars in 2007, the MPCs have achieved the level that Western Europe showed in 1950, or that Romania showed in 1974. With this growth rate the MPCs will take 157 years to reach Europe level, a result that Greece and Portugal achieved in 25 years. Norton, 2008 p. 10

<sup>15</sup> The energy sector still represents the most important portion of the exports to the EU and the rest of the world, leaving these countries suffering from oil price fluctuations, while the textile and clothes sectors do not register significant improvement. Moreover, the MPCs remain too much dependent on agro-food imports from the EU, revealing a production structure that is unable to satisfy the basic nutritional needs of the population.

<sup>16</sup> Telò, (ed), 2006 p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> When it comes to the emerging markets, the European Union invests primarily in Southeast Asia, then in Latin America and finally in the MPCs. The EU, by addressing its investments mainly to other regions, could lose the opportunity to be the principal economic actor in the region, as the investors from the Gulf are the second most important economic actors in the area.

<sup>18</sup> Malanima(ed), 2007 p. 105

in South-South economic integration, which anyway remains below potential. With regard to FDI, some intra-MEDA projects are being developed with cumulated flows while, as regards the deepening of economic integration between MPCs, the 2001 Agadir Agreement established a new free trade area joining together Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco.<sup>19</sup> However, as in the case of the Great Arab Free Trade Area, the integration results are not significant.

In conclusion, we can see that the European Union itself, evaluating ten years of intervention, affirms that the results were not enough, even if progressive free trade with the EU has favored exports and investment, there have been improvements in macro-economic stability and human development indicators show improvements in health conditions and overall life expectancy. In addition, even if the EU underlines that the formula “trade plus investment plus cooperation” is as pertinent as it was in 1995, the EU itself and the major European study centers<sup>20</sup> admits the results are not sufficient to guarantee MPCs economic take-off and the creation of an economic environment that is more accessible and attractive for foreign investments. As a result of the insufficient growth and continued demographic expansion, the gap in prosperity between the EU and most Mediterranean countries has increased, and there has been no real economic convergence. In this context, the “low politics strategy” cannot work.<sup>21</sup>

## **2. What is the problem?**

Then, after almost twenty years of EU intervention, the results do not indicate sufficient improvement. Europe prefers to invest in other developing regions, the MPC reforms have not been adequate to attract a satisfactory quota of international FDI and the economic integration between MPCs did not yield the expected results.

How we can explain this performance data?

The classical approach to economic integration processes identifies different reasons for the limited success of the EMFTA: low levels of job skills, a sparse entrepreneurial environment, a dearth of market integration, scarce implementation of liberal reforms, etc.

The integration process experts<sup>22</sup> believe that this poor performance should be explained especially taking into consideration the political weakness of the MPCs’ governments, which have failed to adjust their socio-institutional systems to the ever-changing global economic environment. Indeed, the reform processes achieved weaker results than the reforms implemented by other developing countries. This would also explain why European FDI has been more steadily directed toward the Eastern periphery, which features major state stability, a better education system and more cultural complementarities.

Another important factor that many have identified is the failure to resolve the principal tensions existing in the region during the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean policies, like the Middle East conflict. These conflicts of them hindered the development of economic relations, especially in the South, and the complete realization of the expected economic and social benefits.

Finally, the SIA-EMFTA consortium, a study center charged by the EU with studying the sustainability of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Agreements, affirmed in 2007 that the European Member States and the MPCs do not deepen economic integration and, consequently, do not act

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<sup>19</sup> The absence of Algeria must be notice, probably due to the question of sovereignty in the Western Sahara conflict with Morocco.

<sup>20</sup> IE Med, I. E. (2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008); Femise. (September 2006), SIA-EMFTA consortium. (2007).

<sup>21</sup> (European Commission, 20.5.2008, p. 13)

<sup>22</sup> SIA-EMFTA consortium. (2007).

according to the European Union intention, to avoid the classic harmful effects of the FTA when it links together countries with different levels of economic and political development.<sup>23</sup>

According to this point of view, the MPCs do not deepen economic integration because they have become more aware of potential EMFTA impacts than at the beginning of the process.<sup>24</sup> At the same time and from the point of view of the European Member States, especially the Mediterranean ones, it has progressively become clearer that the overall economic gains derived from the EMFTA could be accompanied by potentially adverse social effects arising from agricultural liberalization.<sup>25</sup>

In conclusion, all of these explanations, even if different, find the reason of the lack of economic integration in some kind of supply/demand problem and in terms of political or economical benefits/costs perceived by the partners of the process. The European Union agrees on this analysis and, trying to find solutions to the problems that limit EMFTA success, it believes that it is necessary on one hand to go forward with expanding the liberal reforms, and on the other hand to realize full (even if progressive) economic integration. As we said before, the European Parliament in particular points on the creation of the “Euro-Mediterranean productive area” as fundamental strategy to overcome the present situation.

In this paper, instead, I would like to introduce another explanation for the limited success of the EMFTA, trying to look at the problem from a sociological point of view. Then, I refer to a different theoretical context based on the cognitive components of the economic policies, which is the previous knowledge that the economic and social actors have before entering the market.

I want to highlight that, generally, the efficiency of the economic policy is hindered or favored by some cognitive elements owned by those of who elaborate the policy and those of who receive it. In the Mediterranean context, specifically, I identified two particular cognitive elements, two adversarial social representations, which hinder the efficacy of the integration policy proposed by the EU.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> (SIA-EMFTAconsortium, 2007)

<sup>24</sup> These impacts could be: short-term rises in unemployment, particularly from the liberalization of EU-MPC trade in industrial products and agriculture, and to a lesser extent from services and south-south liberalization; a decrease in wage rates associated with increased unemployment; a significant loss in government revenues in some countries, with a potential for social consequences through reduced expenditure on health, education and social support programs; greater fluctuations in world market prices for basic foods; and adverse effects on the status, living standards and health of rural women as associated with accelerated conversion from traditional to commercial agriculture. In the opinion of the SIA-EMFTAconsortium, many of these potential impacts would occur primarily in the short or medium term, although this may be as long as ten to fifteen years over the full period of adjustment. SIA-EMFTAconsortium, 2007, p. viii.

<sup>25</sup> The adverse effects would be restricted to local areas of EU Mediterranean countries (Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Southern France, and probably also Cyprus and Malta). This would be the reason why these countries do not invest sufficiently in the Euro-Mediterranean project. SIA-EMFTAconsortium, 2007, p. 17-32. The same idea is shared by Beretta, Parisi, & Zoboli (Eds), 2004.

<sup>26</sup> The social representations are defined by the theory as the collective elaboration of a social object by the community for the purpose of behaving and communicating. By means of social representations two different processes are realized. On one hand, they ascribe meaning to new phenomena – objects, relations, experiences, practices, etc - by means of integrating the object being represented into existing worldviews. In this way, the threat that the strange and unfamiliar object poses is being erased. On the other hand, they turn something abstract into something almost concrete. It produces a domestication of the unfamiliar in a way that is far more active than anchoring because objectification saturates the idea of unfamiliarity with reality, turns it into the very essence of reality. It is important to note, therefore, that social representations are depicted as both the process and the result of social construction. In the socio-cognitive activity of representation that produces representations, social representations are constantly converted into a social reality while continuously being re-interpreted, re-thought, re-presented. Commonly, this theoretical approach investigates how scientific theories circulate within common sense, and what happens to these theories when they are elaborated upon by a lay public. The theory postulated two universes: the *reified* universe of science, which operates according to scientific rules and procedures and gives rise to scientific knowledge, and the *consensual* universe of social representation, in which the lay public elaborates and circulates forms of knowledge which come to constitute the content of common sense. (Galli, 2001,p.10). Instead, I would like to focus on how the process of construction of social representation is

Indeed, there are two collective elaborations of the Mediterranean reality that dominate the European and Islamic communities hindering common communication and collaborative behaviors. That means that the individuals orientate themselves, master their material and social world, name and classify the various aspects of their individual and social history according to two different systems of values, ideas and practices.

Because of this double representation, the possibilities of creating an efficient and effective market are reduced. As stated by the theory, in fact, the competitive market needs some extra-contractual elements that imply a diffused trust and shared expectations between all the cooperating partners.<sup>27</sup>

According to this theory, we can hypothesize another explanation for the scant economic results of the Euro-Mediterranean integration policy: i.e. for the fact that the progressive spread of the economic and social benefits of the Euro-Mediterranean integrated market could not become a reality—that is, the economic advantages experienced by some economic agents (for example, in the energy sector) did not diffuse to the rest of the market—and consequently, the integration process did not develop the necessary solidarity. The explanation is that the growth of Euro-Mediterranean regional top-down institutions, not being founded on spontaneous encounters between economic and governmental agents, could be interpreted as more evidence of a poorly embedded integration process.<sup>28</sup>

Upon introducing this sociological perspective, it is possible to explain better than economic theories why Europe does not invest in the Southern periphery and why the MPCs have not deepened liberal reforms and strengthened south-south cooperation. In these fields of economic action, in fact, the identified social representations do not permit the creation of the “organic” solidarity necessary to make the regional market efficient. Then, different interpretative schemes and elements of economic “organizational homogeneity”<sup>29</sup> still prevail as part of the different Mediterranean realities, undermining the efficiency of the EU economic integration policy and the exploitation of the economic and social benefits foreseen in economic theory.

What are these social representations? How much is the EMFTA project affected by them? Are these social representations undermining EMFTA success? Who has participated in the construction of the dominant Mediterranean social representation? Which cultural, political and economic climates have fostered these social representations? These questions are at the heart of the next section.

(Contd.)

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based on a double relation that extends from the “scientific” universe to that of the “common man” and vice-versa. In my opinion, social representation is the product of the circular interaction of different levels—those of scientists, policy-makers, and economists—as long as media and common men interact consistently and produce shared historical, cultural and geographical concepts.

<sup>27</sup> The social theory explains that a competitive market, if it is to be efficient, needs extra-contractual relations that generate reliability between the market players, bearers of different economic interests. Commonly, these extra-contractual relations develop progressively with the economic advantages of the free market through the diffusion of the capitalistic division of labor. When economic benefits are experienced by a large number of social actors, a new kind of solidarity emerges. This interpersonal solidarity defines reciprocal expectations and social aims and limits individual interests, increasing the social legitimization and the degree of social acceptance of market relations. In fact, the individual and collective subjects define priorities “paying attention to the most appropriate and legitimate solutions defined by the context in which their social interactions are placed”. (Trigilia, 1998, p. 400). This “organic” solidarity, then, offers the participants a new “collective conscience”. The idea of a market economy that creates a solidarity necessary to the system functioning can be found in the following texts: Trigilia, 1998; Durkheim, 1893(1996); Simiand in Meldolesi L., 1991.

<sup>28</sup> For an accurate description of the political, economic and cultural institution created by EU to favor the integration process with MPCs, see: Xenakis & Chrysoschoou, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Powell & DiMaggio, 1991(2000).

### 3. Clash of civilizations or Encounter of Civilizations?

There have been many representations of the Mediterranean in human thought since ancient man placed it at the center of the world.

Edward Said, one of the most important figures in the analysis of western representations of the “Orient”, said that the European “taxonomic passion” elaborated a close Orient and a remote Orient.<sup>30</sup> For this author, in the mental geography of the European the East represents both an Old world which harkens back to an Eden or a lost paradise, and, on the contrary, a new land, to be discovered as Columbus did in America and in which it could be possible to found a New World.

Similar categories are still detectable in the present images of the Islamic periphery.

Therefore, according to interviews with some informed persons<sup>31</sup> and the analysis of the scientific literature and the daily media regarding both integration in the Mediterranean area and, more generally, the relationship between the West and Islam, my hypothesis is that the representations of Mediterranean relations are twofold. The historic and geographic imaginations elaborated by the “Occident” over many centuries and the different images of the international role that EU should have as fortress or civil power flow together in these social representations.<sup>32</sup>

The first envisioning sees the Mediterranean as the backdrop for a “clash of civilizations”, the new wall of the twenty-first century, thanks to which the people’s identity is re-defined against common enemies. The Orient, in this case, appears obscure, distant, and opposite. The only possibility of interaction emerges in colonization, intended to create a “New World” based on the market principles and those of liberal democracy. From a political point of view, this representation in the USA motivated an aggressive foreign policy at the beginning of the new century, while in Europe, it translates into the idea of building up Europe as a fortress for its citizens. The European Member states, in fact, are bearers of a specific national need: the protection of the welfare state, production, markets, urban spaces and national customs from the “other”. In Islamic society, this representation has also acquired a high level of diffusion justifying a growing dissent against the liberal agenda sponsored by the international organizations.

The second social representation that dominates the scientific literature looks to the Mediterranean as the place where it is possible to realize the Kantian dreams of a “perpetual peace” between free republics, built on the natural human desire for peace and material well being. The Mediterranean region is viewed from both sides as a place of prosperity, a laboratory of pacific cohabitation for individuals who subscribe to different cultural messages.

The representation of the “encounter” has taken place in the Islamic society through the action of the MPC reformist governments during the most part of the XIX century. However recently, due to the economic and social difficulties that the MPCs are experiencing and due to the Iraqi war in 1991, for the majority of Islamic social groups this representation has lost importance in favor of the necessity to protect the Islamic society against the Occidental perpetual colonization. On the contrary, this representation is still important in the Occidental thinking in which it is linked to the diffusion of the market forces. In this perspective, in fact, the free market assumes the role of bearer of rights and democracy and, then, of bearer of the encounter of the civilizations. It is believed that as successful as

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<sup>30</sup> Said, 1999 [1978], p. 63

<sup>31</sup> I met two European parliamentaries, four representatives from Third Mediterranean countries embassies, two representatives of Italian Chambers of Commerce.

<sup>32</sup> In my thesis work I recognized a third social representation that sees the world divided in autocratic and democratic countries, with two new adversarial world centers: China and USA. In this perspective, the Pacific Ocean is seen as the “new Mediterranean” and Europe becomes a marginal partner. See: (Kagan, 2008; Tremonti, 2008)

the social and economic EU model based on the economic integration has been in promoting the integration of European countries with a long history of wars and conflicts, so will the same model be suitable as applied to Western-Islamic relations. From this perspective, the European Union becomes the “civil power” with the international role of bringing to Islamic society the knowledge of the advantages of free market and liberal democracy.

In developing my thesis, I have analyzed the social, economic and political context in which these representations were developed and considered the subjects that have had a determining role in their definition. In the next pages, however, I will introduce these concepts with an emphasis on the effects that these representations have had on the efficiency of Euro-Mediterranean integration policies.

Therefore, I will explain how in the Mediterranean, two social representations coexist, hindering the creation of an efficient competitive market: on one hand, the EU incentivizes the free market to achieve liberal democracies in MPCs, believing this to be the way to overcome cultural differences; while on the other hand, these policies are hindered by both the European member states, who demand a “European fortress”, and Islamic societies, which are worried about losing their culture.

### ***Encounter of Civilizations***

The first identified representation is the idea that the cultural differences existing in the region will progressively disappear in tandem with the realization of a unique Mediterranean society.<sup>33</sup>

The basic idea is that humanity is on the road to a common destiny. There are two main images of this common future. The first one foresees the pacific coexistence of different, reciprocally respectful, cultures; the second one, instead, foresees a definitive end product in the form of a sole universal lifestyle, either the American one or an amalgam that is the result of reciprocal contamination. What is shared by these two representations is the view of globalization as a generally positive phenomenon, in which opportunities, interests and hierarchies can be remixed and redistributed worldwide.

This is the image proposed by A. Toynbee in 1950, which sees civilizations as men climbing a mountain. “Even if these are certainly separated individuals, they are nevertheless involved in the same challenge. All of them try to climb the same mountain side, starting from the same point towards the same destination”.<sup>34</sup> It is the image of the progressive liberalization of man.

Looking at the two specific cultures that coexist in the Mediterranean area, the Islamic and the Occidental, many scholars of this theoretical background have come to believe that these civilizations are destined to meet each other due to the fact that they have many similarities: the shared genealogy of their religion that gives to the two civilizations the same universalistic image of the world and the same ecumenical vision under which universal brotherhood is sought<sup>35</sup>; the shared importance given to the concepts of human dignity<sup>36</sup>; the shared references to the scientific method<sup>37</sup>; the diffused use, in

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<sup>33</sup> The progressive “encounter of civilizations” is theorized in many different search fields, both at the international level and at the local level of analysis. From an international point of view, the following texts fall clearly within this representation: Courbage & Todd, 2009 [2007]; Matvejevic, 1998(2008); Guarracino, 2007; Bono, 2008. A particularly interesting founding is that most of the scientific literature on the topic of the development of South Italy also falls within this representation. This literature, in fact, sees the realization of the economic integration of the Mediterranean Sea as an opportunity for the Southern Europe, which could gain a new cultural and economic centrality. This is particularly clear in the following texts: Bono, 2008; Giustino, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Toynbee, A., 1950, *A Study of the history*, p. 317, in Cotesta, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> For both the religions, “The men born equal; all the men are equal in front of God; all can achieve paradise, if they believe and act following the divine precepts.” (Cotesta, 2004 p. 76.) Based on this hypothesis, it is possible to believe that the Western/Christian world and Islamic world will achieve a “global culture” in which all men will brothers. The same idea is shared by Lewis, 1995 [1990].

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, it can be noted that human rights have acquired a recognizable value in both cultures, as demonstrated by the fact that there are both western and Islamic declarations of the rights of man, even if the western declaration is defined

the Occident as in Islam, of the most modern weapons, communication media and financial techniques. In addition, other cultural aspects and lifestyles are becoming less linked to local traditions, ethnic groups, nations and particular societies, leading to universal habits in different contexts. It is worth remembering that until one or two centuries ago, cultural, gender and racial differences were considered proper, while today the world structure appears less unequal.<sup>38</sup>

How is it possible to promote these similarities? How can this common destiny be achieved so as to achieve a pacific world order?

The major international organizations essentially believe that a peaceful world will be reached through the diffusion of the economic advantages of the free market. The WTO<sup>39</sup>, the FMI, the G7 meetings<sup>40</sup>, the EU, and the Clinton administration<sup>41</sup> have formed their political and economic policies of the last years based on this principle.

In the European Union action the necessity to promote the “encounter of civilization” has been linked to the Member States’ will to acquire a more autonomous international role. Indeed, to achieve international power in the last twenty years the EU has begun to integrate its outskirts, trying to become the centre of a ring characterized by stability, prosperity and good governance<sup>42</sup>. The Mediterranean policy that we have described in the first paragraph is part of this project.

However, for the purpose of this paper, the most important element of this policy is the link with the representation of the encounter of the civilizations. The EU integration policy with the Mediterranean periphery, based, as we said before, on the homologation of the regulative system of the economy to the liberal model, is founded on the idea that the liberal market can be used as instrument to achieve regional stability and to overcome any cultural or social differences. In the EU opinion, through market forces and through the integration of the economic system the “encounter of civilization” will be progressively realized.

From the EU perspective, intra-Mediterranean economic integration will constantly grow as the Mediterranean population comes to understand that this way of organizing economic life is the fairest and most efficient, capable of satisfying everyone’s preferences at lower costs. Competitive

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“universal”, while the Islamic one just refers to Muslim countries. In these declarations, even if there are some content-based differences, “regarding the general conception of man, his dignity, rights and autonomy, there is a notable convergence”. (Cotesta, 2004, p. 78)

<sup>37</sup> “Independently from the hypothesis of the existence of a God, the scientific reasoning is based on protocol analysis, concept construction, organization and realization of evidences far from religious logic [...]. In some way, the principle for which all the men are equal and endowed with reason with the authority principle. Therefore the scientific logic became a universal point of reference. What unites the scientists of all the world is the logic of reasoning, notwithstanding the differences in cultural aspects, in the way to set out the problems, the paradigms and the scientific theory. In the sciences one can find organization, hierarchy, ambition and individual interests, desire and longing of power. The essential is not this. The essential is the liberty, the autonomy, the judge’s independence, without which the scientific reasoning is impossible. Therefore the science, today, is becoming the main cultural factor of world unification” (Cotesta, 2004, p. 53). The author, for example, believes that the principles of US network CNN are the same of the Islamic network Al Jazeera: “the western point of view is often confronted and confuted referring to the Islamic point of view. The same images of the events are selected by the two networks starting from their world conception. The two networks have a similar organization (the Al Jazeera editors were generally formed in UK) and nevertheless their interpretation of the events is different (...). The selection and interpretative criteria answer to different conception of human dignity, universal values, and proper interests. What unifies the two different perspectives is the fact that a *true* interpretation exists and that it can be recognized by means of a game in which the identification of the evidence and of his confutation follows the same rules. (Cotesta, 2004, p. 80).

<sup>38</sup> Courbage & Todd, 2009 [2007]

<sup>39</sup> Tremonti, 2008

<sup>40</sup> G7, 2002

<sup>41</sup> Diletti, Mazzonis, & Toaldo, 2009

<sup>42</sup> Gallina(Eds), A. (2003).

capitalistic institutions, indeed, favoring economic development, should balance economic efficiency and consensus, causing the increased diffusion of wellness and limiting disparities.

This social consensus should progressively bring together the different Mediterranean societies and should lead to a progressive integration of the Mediterranean countries into the modern capitalistic “collective conscience”, with similar “trust contexts” and “risk contexts”. This means that all of the cultural and social differences will be overcome by the progressive diffusion of market advantages.<sup>43</sup>

The European Commission itself affirms that “The EU *acquis*, which has established a common market based on the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital, ensuring competition and a level playing field based on shared norms and integrating health, consumer and environmental protection, could serve as a model for countries undertaking institutional and economic reform.”<sup>44</sup> In the same vein, the European Parliament affirms that “this policy is a key tool for providing incentives to our neighboring countries to draw closer to the Union, for encouraging them to implement a European system of values and for boosting the economic and social development of the regions bordering the Union, such developments being of interest to both the EU and its neighbors”.<sup>45</sup>

In this framework must be located also the expressed desire of the EU to create in the Mediterranean a productive area in which common tradition, links, solidarity should bring to what, in the EU intention, should become an integrated area with all the characteristics of a typical industrial district. The EU wanted to consolidate a ring of stability, security, prosperity and good governance based on the values of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In this framework, peripheral countries that make an effort and achieve significant progress towards enacting the social, political and economical EU model will be rewarded on the part of the EU with inclusion in the single market and with the free movements of their goods, services, capital, and persons.<sup>46</sup>

The achievement of these results could give the EU not only a more expansive economic international identity but also a new cultural identity as a formal promoter of civility, democracy, and peace realized through a market economy. In political rhetoric, this new role is called that of the “civil power.”<sup>47</sup> On this basis, Europe implicitly indicates to Mediterranean partner countries the strategies necessary to achieve a progressive “civilization”: on one hand, the Western model of “civil” democracy promises individual freedoms, political participation and political responsibility; on the other hand, the creation of social market economies yields economic and social wellness and social equity. Finally, a “civil” foreign policy brings peace and safety.

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<sup>43</sup> Then, the idea, ancient as economic science, is that once the institutional obstacles to the mobility of capital and labor are eliminated, economic development based on a competitive economic system will be achieved. The reforms asked of MPCs in hopes of achieving a more integrated system and receiving financial aid are indeed based on the reduction of protectionist policies and the creation of liberal democracy as capable of ensuring liberal competition, private property and a lack of intervention in the economy. Economic cooperation will create a progressive approach to the Mediterranean regulative systems, which will mean more similarities in terms of education, technology, rules, and economic behaviors. This approach, as we said before, is called in the literature the “low politics strategy”.

<sup>44</sup> EuropeanCommission, 2003-03-11, p. 10

<sup>45</sup> EuropeanParliament, 2007-10-26, p. 15

<sup>46</sup> This approach is based on the idealtipic concept of the meso-region, an area that exists in a specific territorial space with similar historical, cultural, and economic characteristics and is divided in successive zones subordinated to its center. The ideal meso-regional system is a polycentric system of cooperating economies used to achieve the greatest distribution of benefits between member countries. Indeed, in a meso-region, a similar level of specialization but different levels of technological capacity are used to achieve a productive system that can satisfy needs and address existent and emergent markets. This should contribute to peace and to a different exploitation of resources based on the reactivation of endogenous forms of political, social, and economic organization between the different parts of the area, developing external and internal interdependences and eliminating the negative effects of an unequal distribution of the power. Cfr. Gallina (eds), 2003.

<sup>47</sup> This new role is supposed to be different from the US role, which is accused to be more military, bilateral, and asymmetric. Teld(ed.), 2006; Teld, 2004.

The question remains, however, of to what extent this “ideology” is useful and actionable in the Mediterranean region. Does this structured “cognitive resource” help us to achieve an efficient program of intervention, or it is rather an obstacle to a pragmatic approach to the area?

Actually the European Union action based on the representation explained above and on its attempt to reach a more powerful international role, seems to promote development instruments poorly based on its understanding of Islamic countries. In particular, EU policymakers do not take into consideration the Islamic cultural resistance to liberal policies, which are perceived as destructive of social networks.

Instead, it would need to look closely at the history of a population that, since its ancient glories, has in different moments conformed to the Western successful model but has never reached a level of dignity similar to what this people experienced in the past. The “encounter of civilizations” representation also causes us to underestimate Islamic frustration after a century of western colonization through cultural, social and economic patterns.<sup>48</sup> Today, consequently, Islamic society exhibits a rather diffused refusal of the democratic model based on a market economy, which is the model on which the European Union has built its Euro-Mediterranean intervention. This Islamic refusal is one of the principal components of the other social representation dominating the Mediterranean reality: the clash of civilization.

### *Clash of Civilizations*

The “clash of civilizations” approach is the other representation that has experienced a high degree of diffusion in “Mediterranean discourse”<sup>49</sup>.

Notably, the first formulation of the approach can be found in Huntington’s book *Clash of civilizations* and in the political actions of Neo-Conservatism, having emerged on the US intellectual and political scene in the last twenty years. This intellectual and political movement is based on the growing desire of Western society to found a new moral base in the modern era, against the destructive diffusion of relativism, the interpreter of the popular feeling associated with the progressive societal desegregation caused by the liberalization of every field, starting with the economic one.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, the desire was expressed by different authors and policymakers<sup>51</sup>, but only in Huntington’s work can we find a clear reference to the international order. Huntington reacted to the American optimism expressed in Fukuyama’s idea of the “end of the history”<sup>52</sup> and the beginning of an

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<sup>48</sup> To a deeper analysis of the Islamic history and the West-Islam relations I refer to: Braudel, 2002[1949]; Gruber, 2007; Hourani, 1992; Lewis, 2004; Lewis, 1995 [1990]; Lewis, 2009 [2004]

<sup>49</sup> Matvejevic, 1998(2008).

<sup>50</sup> The idea of the diffusion in USA and, more generally, in the western world of a sense of a insecurity also caused by the liberalization of the markets can be found in the following texts: Huntington, 2000 [1996]; Sangalli, 2009; Wallerstein, 2004; Wallerstein, 2004; Ratier, 2005; Battista, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> In USA I identified two authors particularly important for this movement: Leo Strauss, that wrote his “Natural rights and history” in 1953 and Bloom, with his “Closing of the American Mind”, written in 1987. Between the policy makers, Reagan is recognized as one of the godfather of Neo-conservatism. Actually, in the '60 in the United States, a group of disillusioned liberals, including Irving Kristol and Paul Wolfowitz, looked to the political thinking of Leo Strauss after the perceived failure of President Johnson's "Great Society". They came to the conclusion that the emphasis on individual liberty was the undoing of the plan. They envisioned restructuring America by uniting the American people against a common evil, and set about creating a mythical enemy. These factions, the Neo-Conservatives, came to power under the Reagan administration, with their allies Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, and work to unite the United States in fear of the Soviet Union.

<sup>52</sup> Fukuyama sees the end of Cold war as evidence of the everlasting triumph of liberalism over communism and the end of every conflict. While he admits that certain internal conflict will continue to exist within liberalism such as the economic conflict among classes, he dismisses these conflicts as manageable. Fukuyama, 1996.

everlasting “Pax Americana”, which had its political expression in the foreign policy of American President Clinton. Huntington, on the contrary, tried to demonstrate that after the end of the Cold War, new conflicts would appear, in particular between the two major cultural blocks that then existed in the world, the West and Islam. This conflict would destroy one of the two cultures if no international organization intervened quickly.

It is important to note that Huntington never refers to Western civilization as superior. This is the reason why I defined his approach as “soft”. On the contrary, he affirms the necessity for the USA, and the West in general, to work to guarantee the persistence of Western civilization as threatened by the Islamic diffusion worldwide.

In any event, the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 seemed to confirm Huntington’s hypothesis, and President Bush and his counselors reviewed his theoretical elaborations and declared the “total war on terror” and the need for a “new Western crusade”.

Thus, while this was probably not what Huntington intended, the “Islamic block” became the symbol of “Evil”. From this perspective, which I define the “hard” perspective, the Mediterranean Sea becomes the new frontier between two opposing worlds: the *reified* universe of science has met the *consensual* universe of social representations and the political interests of some policymakers, creating a stronger representation in which, on one hand, the Islamic culture is seen as reactionary and oppressive and, on the other hand, the West acquires the role of human rescuer.<sup>53</sup>

This representation had affected the European context as well. In fact, the policies extended towards the Mediterranean can be interpreted not as the result of openness toward cultural and economic integration but rather as the expression of a diffused sense of insecurity that is growing in Europe. Based on this hypothesis, it would seem that European development aids are the answer to the member states’ need to improve national security, ensure the availability of gas and oil and control immigration flows.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, the “Clash of civilizations” doctrine has broadened European insecurity, as seen in the interpretations of other intellectuals. From their perspective, the “insecure, malleable, relativistic” European culture risks disappearance at the hands of the stronger Islamic culture, which is perceived as more “anchored, confident and strengthened by common doctrines”?<sup>55</sup> Christopher Caldwell, for example, in his latest book, affirms that the cultural openness and the free entry of immigrants, for the most part Islamic, will combine to yield a different type of Europe, weaker in its economic and social structure. Even if many countries are tightening their immigration laws, shifting to a skills-based immigration system and setting citizenship tests for would-be immigrants, that could be not enough. Europe’s indigenous population is aging fast, with a quarter of Europeans over the age of 60, while immigrants have large families. In this framework the European society is risking to be changed by the more structured and self-confident Islamic culture.

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<sup>53</sup> Krugman and others (Krugman, 2008; Gaja, 1991; Giorgio, 2003) sustain that the President Bush “war on terror” was merely a way to displace the attention of the Americans from the fiscal policy and to justify the need of controlling Middle-East without directly referring to oil needs. Indeed, the removal of Iraqi power for USA was an absolute imperative in order to maintain the control on the Middle-Eastern oil and guarantee the action of the Gulf Oil-Monarchies in maintaining low the oil prices during the OPEC meetings. I would prefer looking to this phase of the American history as the result of these economic, internal and external, interests, but also as the result of the social representations. In my hypothesis, indeed, on one hand, all the authors of the latest part of XX century are worried about seeing the end of US international primacy and, more in general, of the supremacy of the Western World, according to (Diletti, Mazzonis, & Toaldo, 2009); on the other hand, another social representation, ancient as Europe, affects the Western policy toward Islam, looking at the Islamic society as “barbarians” to be conquest and civilized, representation clearly showed by Schmitt in 1950 (Cotesta, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Xenakis & Chrysochoou, 2001.

<sup>55</sup> Caldwell, 2009, p. 47.

The Italian policymaker Giulio Tremonti wrote a book that expresses similar concepts. In particular, Tremonti described the diffused demand for greater cultural and economic protection and the general need for a new moral foundation of European society. In his opinion, the liberal idea of a world integrated by means of the diffusion of the market was a utopic one. The mercantile “perpetual peace, which would have been finally possible in a world leveled off over the leveled geography of the big market”, which should have guaranteed “the absolute rational domain of the market over all the human irrationality” would be unreachable. On the contrary, globalization had had many negative results, setting free uncontrollable forces and increasing feelings of personal and social insecurity. Tremonti perceives the risk that the “quiet” and “gentle”<sup>56</sup> Europe will be colonized by the emerging countries.<sup>57</sup> These are the reasons why he asks for a “fortress Europe” as necessary to defend the European culture, traditions, habits, and social and economic conquests and to help Europe survive in “that battle camp that is becoming the new world”.<sup>58</sup>

Huntington’s book enjoyed wide diffusion also in Islamic society, enhancing the already diffused representation of a conflict between the West and Islam. Indeed Islamic societies developed significant frustration as the western groups, Europeans and Americans, began to interfere in internal dynamics of Arab countries. The Middle Eastern and Moroccan societies have for at least a century tried to adjust their socio-economic systems to accommodate the norms of western liberal democracy, pursuing a kind of modernity that should have brought them the ancient dignity. However, during this period, the liberal reforms implemented by the Islamic government did not yield the expected results in terms of diffused wellness; instead, the result was individualism, the desegregation of society and persistent western control of economic affairs. Then a new movement emerged: intellectuals, religious and secular groups, writers and poets began to ask for a return to traditional Islamic values, with Islam perceived as the only keeper of a right society and the only bearer of international autonomy.<sup>59</sup>

As in the case of USA and Europe, this popular feeling of societal desegregation was taken up by the political regimes. Saddam Hussein, in particular, was an important interpreter of the immanency of a clash between the two civilizations.<sup>60</sup> Even if Saddam's government gave women added freedoms,

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<sup>56</sup> Tremonti, 2008, p. 7, 21, 29

<sup>57</sup> Tremonti clearly affirms that the myth of the XXI century, the myth of economy that is everything, that knows everything, that do everything; the myth of the economy like the absolute dominant of our existence, exclusive matrix of all the knowledges and all the values; the myth to which many especially in Europe believed in the last years, stole us a piece of life and history. Tremonti, 2008, p. 11

<sup>58</sup> (Tremonti, 2008, p. 31)

<sup>59</sup> Hourani, 1992. Lewis explains the “Muslim anger” over the modern world with great efficiency. Educated to a religious culture in which, since the beginning, the integrity means supremacy, he saw that supremacy defeated in all the world by the western power; defeated in his country by intruders coming from abroad, with their foreign customs and their western projects; defeated in his home by emancipated women and rebel youths. Educated in a social system that was complex but efficient, built on loyalty and duties, he hears that loyalty, defined by religion and family links, accused of sectarianism and nepotism, and he sees those duties derided and abandoned for capitalistic materialism and socialist expropriations. Impoverished by real economic and demographic problems that are increased by bad management and misgovernment, he acquires, thanks to the omnipresent mass media, a dolorous experience of the differences between rich and poor, today progressively richer and poorer, and in a way more visible than ever. And he notices also that the life style of the richest people and of the oppressors – their house, their clothes, their manners, their foods and their hobbies – are equals to the infidel western ones. Lewis, 1995 [1990], p. 90-91. To further explore “Islamic anger”, retracing the Islamic world evolution, its relations with Europe, the slow process of decadency and of subservience to foreign interests, the growth of nationalism, the suffered process of independence and the perpetual US control on the production and sale of oil. I referred to the following texts: Gaja, 1991; Giorgio, 2003; Hourani, 1992; Lewis, 1995 [1990]; Lewis, 2004; Lewis, 1997; Norton, 2008; Rivera & Arkoun, 2002

<sup>60</sup> It is worth remembering the hypothesis of Adam Curtis, expressed in the *BBC* documentary film *The Power of Nightmares*, and subtitled *The Rise of the Politics of Fear*. This film compares the rise of the Neo-Conservative movement in the United States and the radical Islamist movement, making comparisons on their origins and claiming similarities between the two. It shows Egyptian civil servant Sayyid Qutb, depicted as the founder of modern Islamist thought, visiting the U.S. from 1948 to 1950, when the neo-conservatism movement began to grow. He came to learn

offered them high-level government and industry jobs, and created a Western-style legal system, making Iraq the only country in the Persian Gulf region not ruled according to traditional Islamic law, he used the “holy war” to unite the Arabic world. His appeal, indeed, rested on a three-pronged strategy: first, he projected himself as the Arab leader who had stood up to the West and the U.S. in particular; secondly, he elevated his struggle to the level of a holy war against the West and its allies in the Middle East; and thirdly, he brought Israel and, by extension, the Palestinian issue into the conflict, thus offering Arab nationalism and Islamism a common cause.<sup>61</sup>

The diffusion of Huntington’s theory of the “Clash of Civilizations” and of its harder neo-conservative version further radicalized Muslim perceptions of the Occident.<sup>62</sup>

### ***The two misvaluations and the way in which they interact***

Might the described social representations help to clarify the regional reality?

On the basis of what we have underlined we could say that if we look at the Mediterranean region from one point of view, we see a reality composed of different cultural, social and economic aspects on the way to achieving ever-better integration thanks to the diffusive capacity of the capitalist world economy. On the other side, if we look at the Mediterranean region based on the other proposed representation, we see two adversarial cultural, economic and social blocks that are fighting to prevail.

Which one of these representations fits better with reality? As I have shown in depth in my thesis, both of them at the same time underestimate and overestimate some characteristics of the Mediterranean area, hindering any real comprehension of the regional reality and, consequently, a pragmatic approach to economic development.

On the one hand, the “clash of civilizations” idea overestimates the role of culture in contemporary global conflicts, forgetting the importance of disputes over scarce resources and underestimating the necessity of internal differentiation. In addition, this perspective describes the Mediterranean region as divided into two hostile blocks by a cultural frontier, underestimating the importance of centuries of interaction, the significant differences between the different parts of Islam and Europe and the different way to be a Muslim.

On the other hand, the “encounter of civilizations” representation causes us to underestimate Islamic frustration after a century of Western colonization in cultural, social and economic areas, forgetting that the development model proposed to the Mediterranean partner states is coherent and legitimate for the Western political, economic and moral system in particular, but may not be so for the Islamic Countries.

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about the education system, but becoming disgusted with what he saw as a corruption of morals and virtues in western society through individualism. When he returns to Egypt, he is disturbed by westernisation under Gamal Abdel Nasser and becomes convinced that in order to save society it must be completely restructured along the lines of Islamic law while still using western technology. Qutb is executed in 1966, but he inspires the future mentor of Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to start his own secret Islamist group. (Wikipedia c. d., *The Power of Nightmares*, 2009 )

<sup>61</sup> (Xenakis & Chrysochoou, 2001, p. 48, n.45). Since '90, with the first Gulf war, until the recent invasion of Iraq, he used to call the fights as different phases of "the mother of all battles." In his television discourses Hussein used to evoke the name of God more than a dozen times. "You, the men of our great armed forces," he implored, "fight against them as you would fight against the enemies of God." Hussein, calling President Bush and the allied forces "criminals (...) carrying their hatred and their evil with them," asserted that the purpose of the latest bombing attack was for Westerners "to impose their will of colonialism." "God Almighty is capable to give the faithful the victory," he declared, calling on Iraqis to launch a jihad, or holy war, against the West (Fineman, 1993). Recently, then, Saddam Hussein recalled for a Jihad against the US led invasion to Iraq. In a statement read on national television, he said: "The aggression that aggressors are acting out against the stronghold of faith is an aggression on the religion, the wealth, the honor and the soul and an aggression on the land of Islam (...) Therefore, jihad is a duty in confronting them," Saddam added, saying "those who are martyred will be rewarded in heaven. Seize the opportunity, my brothers." (Ryu, 2003)

<sup>62</sup> Gilles Kepel (2003), Middle-eastern analyst, in (Wikipedia C. , 2009)

Therefore, the Mediterranean reality appears much more complicated and heterogeneous than the major social representations would lead us to believe. We can find contrary signals even if we look to the daily news without one of the lenses described above. Even if “fundamentalist” Islam continues to exist and we continue to feel that some fundamental rights are being violated, the Islamic capital, derived from oil income, is becoming one of the major investment funds globally and has helped “developed” countries to weather the recent economic crises.

Otherwise, these representations do not just hinder us in our comprehension of the Mediterranean reality but also hinder the efficiency of the economic integration policy applied by the EU. Indeed, through the social representations identified, that act both together and separately, a context not favorable to the realization of the benefits of the economic policies is determined.

First of all, this different way of looking at the region has different actionable implications. One view is that the EU must open itself to others to exploit associated economic advantages and encourage peace. The other view is that the Member States and the Islamic societies must close their frontiers as much as possible to ensure the protection of their social and economic model. The interaction between these two actionable implications of the two identified social representations nullify both the expected results.

In fact the EU, according to the “encounter” representation, promotes the commercial liberalization, trying to reach both regional stabilization and a more autonomous international role. Otherwise, the realization of this policy, and the benefits that the cooperating partners should perceive, are hindered by the interaction with the other identified social representation, the clash between cultures, that is founded in the adverse inclination of the Member States and of the Islamic countries, as well as by the euro-centric tendency of the Communitarian Institutions.

As we notice, in fact, even if the idea of the “encounter” still formally characterizes the EU approach to the region of the latest period, informally its euro-centric profile prevails, clearly identifiable if we look at the way in which the policies are built up. In addition, while the EU endorses its openness project, in the Member States widespread social movements promote rejection of immigrants and the protection of the cultural specificities of ever smaller territories. At the same time, while Europe formally promotes market liberalization, the Mediterranean Member Countries still protect their sensitive markets, like the agro-food and textile sectors. Then, the potential benefits that should derive from the openness and the integration of the market are invalidated by the incompleteness of the process and the whole regional dynamic remain harnessed by the different way to act in the area.

At the same time, the idea of the “encounter” is losing its relevance in the Islamic society too, in comparison with the adversarial image of the Mediterranean, typical of the “clash of the civilizations”, weakening the attractiveness of the western liberal agenda. Even if the Islamic countries have tried to reform their regulative system since the '80, the internal rejection of the policy imported by the “colonizer” has hindered the fulfilment of this process and, then, the exploiting of the relative benefits. According to this incompleteness, the data of the last decade show that the Member States and the FDIIs prefer to invest in other parts of the world, especially in Eastern Europe, considered more in line with EU standards and, then, more profitable, drifting away from the EU formal approach.

In the same vein, the interaction between the two representations make it more difficult to benefit from participating in the major free market institutions, like the World Bank, FMI and WTO, as well as to benefit from the realization of the market liberalization between North and South and between the Southern States: as seen, the free trade agreements have been diffused throughout the region with no big results and all the MPCs have never concluded, even if implemented, a liberal reform agenda.

So the two social representations coexist in the Mediterranean area and do not just produce some overestimations and underestimations. They produce different policies applied by the various subjects existing in the region, and the expected benefits of each policy are reciprocally nullified by the

presence of the other, opposite, policy. The two social representations, then, immobilize the potential effects of the regional policies creating a not favorable context to interaction.

Thanks to this analysis, then, it is possible to introduce a further explanation to the scant results of the Mediterranean cooperation. Upon introducing this sociological perspective, in fact, it is possible to explain better than economic theories do why Europe does not invest in the Southern periphery and why the MPCs have not deepened liberal reforms and strengthened south-south cooperation. In these fields of economic action, in fact, the interaction between the two identified social representations do not permit the creation of the “organic” solidarity necessary to make the regional market competitive and efficient. Then, different interpretative schemes still prevail as part of the different Mediterranean realities, undermining the efficiency of the EU economic integration policy and the exploitation of the economic and social benefits foreseen in economic theory. As seen, on one hand the EU incentivizes the free market to achieve liberal democracies in MPCs, believing this to be the way to overcome cultural differences; while on the other hand, these policies are hindered by both the European member states, who demand a “European fortress”, and Islamic societies, which are worried about losing their culture. In this context, the EU “low politics strategy” cannot be useful.

In conclusion, we can say that the two described social representations have generated a distorted analysis of the regional reality and their interaction has nullified the benefits of European intervention in the region. It will be difficult to overcome these obstacles as long as the EU continues to endorse an ideological model of interaction with its periphery, based more on what it wants the Mediterranean region to be than on what the region really is, and as long as they continue to ignore the negative inclination to the economic integration that is dominant amongst the cooperative partners. The development needs of the region, the stakes of the Islamic and European social groups and the thousand of Mediterranean territorial specificities will remain ignored under such an ideological diatribe.

## **Conclusion**

Coming back to the starting question which we posed at the beginning of this paper, we can affirm that social representations do affect the economic policy. If we look at the way in which the major international players have been approaching the Mediterranean region throughout the last two decades we can recognize a clear relation between social representations and economic policies.

As seen, the representation that we called “encounter of civilizations” has been spreading since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, when the Occident began to be persuaded that the world would be progressively leveled by the flat geography of the free market. The cultural, social or ideological differences would have disappeared thanks to the pressure of the economic advantages that each individual would have received from the interaction in a free market. To make everybody aware of the importance of the new and diffused level of prosperity it would have been enough to facilitate this process and to get different people to perceive these benefits. At this point, History, as announced by F. Fukuyama, would have come to its end and all of humanity would have finally lived in perpetual peace. According to this model of international integration, the Clinton administration has been promoting free exchange agreements with different partner-countries around the world and the European Union has started its policy of economic openness throughout its periphery.

However, the Gulf war in 1991, the tragedy of Somalia and the segmentation of Yugoslavia foretold a very different scenario. Deep-seated territorial identities came out after the fall of the soviet blanket and began to demand a new attention and recognition of their rights. According to these events, already, in 1993 S.P. Huntington stated that the destiny of humanity would have been a clash between cultures, between ancient heritages that could not have been kept asleep only by economic advantages and globalized homologation. That was the representation of the inevitability of the “clash of civilizations”, in which Islam and Occident were considered particularly destined to continue their

everlasting opposition. According to this perspective, brought back to the fore in 2001 after the 9/11 events, the USA undertook a violent contraposition against the Islamic world. According to it, then, the previous economic cooperation was replaced by the necessity of defending the Western identity against the colonization of the “others” and of using the armed forces to obtain the homologation to the western standard. As seen, the European Member States have been particularly influenced by this representation, drifting away from the EU formal approach, while the MPC societies, attracted by the same doctrine, have started to refuse the fulfillment of the liberal reforms asked by EU and major international organizations.

Therefore, the ongoing considerations impels us to pose a further research question: in which way the development policies should be reformed to overcome this ideological diatribe and to conquest a more pragmatic approach to the Mediterranean region?

First of all, thanks to the reflection on the social representations in the Mediterranean area, we are becoming more aware that development can not be only founded on a universal standard model, which is the Western-liberal system, even if the diffusion of the free market still represents one of the principal forces of democratization and peacemaking.

It seems clearer, then, as stated by international debate on these topics, the necessity of adapting the development recipes in accordance with the different characteristics of each context and of making development micro-founded and horizontal, with participation and management from the bottom in particular.<sup>63</sup> A further implication of this is that, in an ever more globalized world, the territorial identity should be protected to obtain not only social cohesion, fundamental for peace and stability, but also an innovative economic advantage, typical of each territory, coming out from the specific mix between cultural tradition and economic life. In this way it would be possible to overcome the described representations, converging toward a new approach that keeps their more relevant aspects together: spreading the free market to promote democracy and protecting cultural identity to preserve social cohesion.

In accordance with this evolution, some of the postulates characterizing the European intervention in the Mediterranean area are being re-orientated. Indeed, in the progressive changes of the codes regulating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the EU has given more attention to the territories that interact through Mediterranean economic cooperation (i.e. the Interreg instruments) and it has tried to promote the greatest involvement of the MPCs in the definition of the development strategies.<sup>64</sup>

Notwithstanding that, the European Union does not completely apply this new strategy. As we have seen in this paper, the European Policies towards the Mediterranean Area are still particularly

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<sup>63</sup> Tsurumi said: “[t]o understand how the local capacities should be developed, the concept of endogenous development is useful. External development models that include foreign knowledge and technology have to be modified to suit traditions and social structures that exist within a developing society so that local and external capacities can be put together. It is not static but dynamic process as the tradition and social structures are likely to change as well by the adoption of modified foreign models”. Tsurumi, K, (1976), p. 1. As consequence of this, Long affirms that “it becomes essential to question or deconstruct certain conventional abstractions such as planned intervention, commoditisation, exchange value, the hegemony of the state, and the dichotomy between so-called expert and local knowledge, in order to replace them by more nuanced, actor-defined conceptions.” In addition, this makes us to eschew “all forms of essentialism and determinism that assume simple cause-and-effect happenings or those that are built upon the logic of universal laws or central tendencies. Such formulations run counter to the actor-oriented premise that is the complex interlocking of actors’ ‘projects’ and practices, and their intended and unintended outcomes, that compose the constraining and enabling frameworks of social action”. Long, N., (2001), p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> For a brief description of the last evolutions of the European Union intervention in the Mediterranean region, see the note 5. In addition, it must be notice that the Commission, even if promoting the liberal agenda, is starting to reform its development policy in accordance with the economic and cultural specificities that characterize the European territories. The European regional entities, consequently, are considered more representatives than the national sphere and, according to this new understanding, the European Union is trying to turning its centralistic governance in favor of a more local definition of the economic policy.

characterized by a centralistic approach that hinders the overcoming of the ideological level of the “encounter of civilization”: the spreading of the free market is still the fundamental way to obtain the coexistence of different cultures, while the EU does not take into consideration the millions of cultural factors that, in the Mediterranean area, moreso than elsewhere, could make this process inefficient. For example, the economic and social reforms asked by the EU to MPCs are based on an occidental model of liberal democracy that do not consider both the different Islamic acceptance of capitalistic market principles and the adversarial representations that hinder economic relations. Mediterranean Countries are only expected to accept or refuse European instruments, while the EU tries to make its Mediterranean policy more efficient simply by “rationalizing” the procedures in order to make them more verifiable and manageable by the center. No relevant power has been given to the local governance over the economic and social processes.

Under these conditions the market economy and the free exchange area, which should have been completed by 2010, cannot get neither the necessary reciprocal trust, nor the necessary social legitimation, nor the necessary organic solidarity founded on real social groups: all elements that, as seen in the paper, the sociological literature identifies as fundamental to get an efficient market. In this context, the cultural differences that do exist between the Mediterranean rims become cognitive disincentives to economic interaction. The advantages experienced by some economic agents in specific sectors (like the energy sector) are not enough to create a diffused and on-going system of micro-practices, in which the “manifold decisions of exchange”<sup>65</sup> structure a well-functioning market and a cohesive society. Then the integrative power of the economic advantages that, in the EU opinion, should motivate intercultural cooperation is not supported by the sort of beliefs and trusts that make the market efficient, operative, functional, reliable and with positive development.

If we do not want to give up the cooperative project and to handle the region instability by the means of military strategies, it seems necessary to work on this aspect of intra-Mediterranean cooperation. The EU should then rediscover local initiatives, promoting the micro-practices that, becoming diffused and continuous, justify the economic interactions and the institution of a free trade area. At the same time, the EU should point particular attention to everlasting Mediterranean cooperation, which have been in place no matter what different “ideological conjunctures”<sup>66</sup> has come one after the other throughout Mediterranean history. According to this common tradition, indeed, the local communities could be more capable of identifying shared characteristics and tendencies which address the European integration policies. This seems the only way to set free the Mediterranean region from the ideological mystifications that see the area as the center of cultural conflicts, or as the virtuous example of European civil power.

In the same way as they are trying to do with EU Internal policy towards its less developed regions, some of the European institutions, like the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliament, agree with these new development strategies and with the importance given to a stronger involvement of the specific territories of the MPCs in elaborating, managing and evaluating the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.<sup>67</sup> In this way it should be possible to achieve Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in line with the habits and system of production and exchange of cooperating contexts, and to realize common ground instead of imposing one model over

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<sup>65</sup> Meldolesi, F. Simiand: *La moneta realtà sociale ed altri scritti*, 1991, p. XXXIX

<sup>66</sup> Braudel, F. 2002 [1949].

<sup>67</sup> The European Parliament, for example, at the point. 9 of one of latest resolution, “[b]elieves that the FTA will be able to offer a genuine opportunity for growth for the SEMCs [the MPCs] only if it is planned on a concerted, gradual basis in the context of a rational, predictable partnership which reflects the socio-economic realities of the SEMCs and promotes economic development and deeper regional integration; emphasises the importance of greater participation by the partner countries and the incentive which partnership provides; recalls that ownership of the objectives of the partnership lies with both shores of the Mediterranean; stresses the need to give the SEMCs the right to control the speed with which they open up their trade and their national strategies for economic and social development”. EuropeanParliament, 2007-03-15. See also PSE, 2008; and Euro-MediterraneanParliamentaryAssembly, 28-03-2008

another. These are the basis on which to build the EMFTA regulative institution as an expression of shared stakes and legitimized by each cooperating part.

To conclude, then, we can say that Europe firstly must rediscover its democratic capacity, refunding its Mediterranean cooperation in accordance with a not-ideological understanding of reality. The Mediterranean region, indeed, probably will not be the center of the world economy any longer. However, the process of reflecting on its complexity, its complementary differences, its long-lasting history, and the need to forego a normative approach to find a successful solution can still offer a lot in terms of models of democratic development for both sides of the region. In fact, the necessity to confront a different culture like the Islamic one could be a good opportunity to challenge the “Eurocentric” model that characterizes the European intervention. The pressing need for pacifying the region, then, could help the European Union to reflect on the democratization of all the European instruments to cooperate and integrate.

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### **Abbreviations**

<b>EMFTA</b>	Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Agreement
<b>MPCs</b>	Mediterranean Partner Countries: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighborhood Policy
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>FDIs</b>	Foreign Direct Investments

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