

Abstract

In view of global and regional transformations which are taking place in the world, the European Union (EU) which made long and major strides towards unity, is looking for affirming its existence as an effective and acting power in the world. The EU, in the framework of re-shaping its regional and international relations, has extended its interests and concerns to include different regions in the world including East Europe and the Mediterranean.

European wishes and efforts have increased in early 1990 to develop Euro-Mediterranean policy known later as Renewed Med – Policy. This kind of policy took its final form in the Barcelona Conference in 1995, and since then it became known in its new name - Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

This partnership meant a comprehensive understanding and cooperation between the two areas including political, security, economic, social, and cultural relations and understandings, whether on bilateral or regional levels. This kind of policy and “partnership” was expressed in the Barcelona Declaration, and in the following conferences of the Partnership.

On the Mediterranean level, the Arab countries are considered as an important element (Pillar). The Partnership called upon the Mediterranean Arab Countries to re-organize their internal affairs and to re-examine their regional and international relations.

In this context, this study traced the status of the Mediterranean Arab countries within this partnership. The main question which is asked in the study is; Is the partnership a European initiative that expressed a real and balanced one with the Arab countries which gives them a real role in it or is it merely a new European attempt to control and dominate the Mediterranean region?.

Seven years after its inception, the debates and discussions about the advantages and influences of the partnership on the Arab countries have not stopped, and did not reach a final conclusion. It is clear that the project opens many windows and opportunities, and poses at the same time serious challenges to both sides.

The Mediterranean Arab countries can improve their share in this Partnership, if they deal properly and correctly with the issue. Unfortunately the Arab System has failed so far; in dealing with the challenges in a proper way therefore they are not taking good advantages of the opportunities which the Partnership opens for them. In order to make the partnership work and succeed the EU, the strong partner, should increase its help to the Arab partners and should be more involved in the affairs of the area. In addition to that, the wide gap in the political, social, and economic fields between the two sides, as well as the regional conflicts particularly the Arab - Israeli conflict, pose serious obstacles to a full and successful partnership and cooperation between the two sides.