

CONCLUSIONS

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The Mediterranean region is an essential geopolitical crossroads, bridging some of the most critical regions of world politics, namely Europe, Africa and the Middle East. For this reason, the issues of regionalism and regionalisation in the Mediterranean have always been complex and have found appeal among a wide range of audiences. This monograph advances the idea of the need to consider the Mediterranean as a region that spans the Black Sea subsystem, including Ukraine and Russia.

Ukraine, which is engaged in a protracted war with Russia, needs every voice of support and every country that can help it hold out until the Russians understand that it is impossible to take over a country whose inhabitants are ready to resist. Given the weight of the Mediterranean in world politics, this region is a priority for Ukrainian foreign policy. In this context, established ties with former communist countries are invaluable and offer hope for mutual understanding with other states and their societies. Today, in Turkey and other non-EU countries, Ukraine is portrayed as a friendly state but not the leading crucial strategic partner. Ukraine must find arguments for why cooperation is for the benefit of the Mediterranean countries and not a gesture of charity. The most compelling argument is the total impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on all global and regional problems; their sharp exacerbation for two years speaks about it.

The war in Ukraine is one of the on-going parameters shaping global politics. It has also impacted the Mediterranean region, mainly as it hosts alternative sources of natural gas and oil to reduce European countries' dependence on Russian supplies. With the growing importance of the Mediterranean as an energy hub, there has been an intensification of disputes over maritime borders, contested gas fields and competition between regional actors for the control of energy resources. These tensions negatively influenced the volatile security

environment in the region, already characterised by a long history of conflict. In this context, cooperation in the field of renewable energy between the EU and the countries of the region, in particular Turkey, has enormous potential to redefine the relationship, offering a means to overcome historical tensions and work towards common goals of environmental sustainability, economic growth and progress towards a sustainable energy future in the Mediterranean.

The migration crisis is another pressing issue exacerbated by instability and insecurity in the Mediterranean. On-going conflicts in Syria, Libya, and other parts of North Africa and the Middle East drive waves of migrants toward Europe's southern borders. As a result, the Mediterranean has become a frontier for the EU. Member states have effectively restructured the regional arrangement to manage migration in the Mediterranean. The EU must take a more active role in developing long-term solutions that address the root causes of migration rather than just working to strengthen border controls and increase cooperation with third countries. The future depends on Europe's ability to develop practical solutions that meet the needs of European societies and migrants themselves. As this volume clearly shows, the EU has developed a set of principles and mechanisms that are supposed to underpin its capacity to manage social policies, such as migration and refugee management. Still, they fail under dominant state national interests.

The Greater Mediterranean concept helps expand the vision of regional peace by revealing the contradictory role of external players such as Russia, the United States, and even regional powers such as Turkey, Iran and the Gulf States that may exacerbate existing tensions. The EU and NATO have not played a successful leadership role in resolving or stabilising regional conflicts that have significantly impacted the European continent. They lacked the military power and political will to make decisions in the region, while other players tried to fill the power vacuum in their stead. As for the EU, it faces many problems arising from the instability in the Mediterranean, which has forced the EU to prioritise regionalisation. The EU strategy is to lead the necessary transformation processes in the Mediterranean non-member states through various policies that include

regionalism, multilateralism, bilateralism, differentiation, convergence and conditionality. The main problem is the Union's inability to implement significant changes in countries where the prospect of EU membership is not on the table. The EU needs to abandon its approach of principled pragmatism. EU countries should cooperate better with other Mediterranean states and go beyond promoting only their regional interests. Closer cooperation will allow the EU to rethink its approach to regionalism in line with developing a comprehensive and unified political framework covering all aspects of cooperation in each region.

The rejection of state-centric attitudes may influence the prospects for Mediterranean regionalism. Various non-state actors, whose ability to develop solidarity and cooperation between partners following regionalism and human rights principles, demand greater attention from the epistemic communities and political elites. Various civil society organisations have played a key role in assisting vulnerable groups, often replacing state services or filling gaps left by state agencies. It is necessary to expand regional governance mechanisms, especially transnational ones, which would contribute to the materialisation of processes and structures of a stable region. Securitisation theories have explained that building a security community is based on shared principles and objectives, as well as a convergence in security culture and a willingness to resolve crises by leaving war as a last resort. Although this is mostly likely to happen within a region, the role of external actors may be crucial.

In a paradigmatic case such as the Mediterranean, stability necessarily involves a complex interplay between regionalisation, security and the influence of external actors. As the war in Ukraine continues, the Mediterranean's importance to Europe's energy security, migration management, and broader geopolitical strategy will grow. The stability and prosperity of this critical region will be determined for decades by the ability of regional and global powers to address these interrelated challenges.