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I would like to start my contribution by introducing what the change in American foreign policy is. When looking for cooperation with the United States within the Mediterranean area, we should take this into consideration.

I would say that it is a radical change, and that we need to understand the nature of it well if we want to be able to take advantage of it. Some, who I would call the “realistic pessimists” or “American pessimists” or “European, American pessimists”, would say that there is no change, just words, which is no change at all. There are a lot of people who are very cautious about the nature of change, because they come from a school where foreign policy is conceived as something unchangeable, something that always represents the best interests of a given country (geography, power, etc.); people we can call geopoliticians.

Nevertheless, I am sure that we all agree that George W. Bush’s policy was a real change from Clinton’s policy. With Obama it is the same, as it is more difficult to find continuity than change. There is something absolutely fundamental in that change: President Obama clearly said at the United Nations (but also before and after being President) that something like a common humanity exists. It may seem rhetorical or idealistic but I think it is a deep belief in itself. There is common humanity, common challenge and common regional challenge, and we need a common answer from the international community. In his speech at the United Nations, he spoke of interdependence security. This is quite interesting, as when we look to the globalised world, we have always placed the accent on interdependent economics. However, the financial economic crisis has shown how interdependent the world is, and how globalisation brought countries together in terms of economic interest in the financial sector.

Is this the same with security? The answer is yes. There is interdependent security. No borders exist for a number of security problems, for example proliferation. There are also global challenges and not necessarily ones regarding security, such as climate change. This idea of a common humanity, a shared humanity and an interdependent world, where security is also part of interdependence, is the basis of President

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Obama's approach toward international politics, which is, of course, far from a traditional, realistic approach. It is much within the liberal tradition of United States foreign policy, that of Presidents Wilson, Webber, Roosevelt and other important American leaders during the history of the United States.

This concept is not so far from the European concept. Edgar Morin, a great French philosopher and thinker, speaks of global patriotism. The idea that challenges bring together people, not only states, and that we possess a shared humanity.

Let us consider, for example, NGOs. Greenpeace and Amnesty International, for example, understand that they do not just operate at the national level, but that there is something like an international common space; they are trying to build an international public opinion. This international public opinion is the basis of what they call global patriotism. They understand that they have a common Earth to protect, a common interest at the global level.

Thus, from this ideological, political or doctrinal concept of President Obama's, I would like to point out what his proposal is about. In fact, he is proposing what the European Union has been proposing for years:

First, he is proposing effective multilateralism. But he is not just proposing effective multilateralism in the traditional sense of the word. Multilateralism in the traditional sense, as it is in the basis of the United Nations Charter, is a way of protecting states and creating a system where the most powerful are controlled by the others. What Obama is proposing is close to what the European Union proposes: effective multilateralism.

President Obama is proposing a multilateralism that is not just a balancing of the powers in the system, nor the containment of the most powerful (in this case the United States), but a multilateralism to solve problems, to find solutions through this multilateralism.

This concept was created in the Balkans because of the inability to respond to wars, to respond to challenges in Bosnia, as well as in Rwanda. The idea exists that you can do it through multilateralism. That is the opposite idea to that of the Bush Administration, of the Neocons. The idea that you can act through a multilateral framework, backed by multilateral legitimacy - and effective at the same time - focusing on solving problems and not just on the containment of power. Moreover, the State is not the ultimate goal of this protection, the ultimate goal are the citizens, closely linked to the concept of human security. As Kofi Annan said in his very famous address during the Millennium Speech at the UN, "borders cannot be walls that protect for doing what they want to do against their citizens".

In order to apply this effective multilateralism concept, President Obama (and the same within the EU) realised that the world is changing dramatically. We are no longer in a Western world, a world as it was during the 1990s, in which a strong alliance between the EU and the US was sufficient to solve most problems. Thus, during the 1990s we were asking the question of how to connect with the United States, as this deep connection would enable us to solve the problems.

Now there is an awareness in the United States, as well as in Europe, that the West cannot do without the rest. It sounds almost like a slogan, but it is the reality. The West needs China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Russia, just as it needs local and regional players. We are in a world that Pierre Hassner calls a world of relative power. No power has enough power to operate alone, and not even a combination of two powers is enough, be it US-EU, or US-China - as it is today *à la mode* - or perhaps Egypt, in the future global governance. We need to work with the others. This is the basis of President Obama's external policy. We need to place the accent not on essential military components, because this will not allow us to engage with the others; instead we need to do it through diplomacy, engagement and long-term strategies that take time, and are more difficult.

How does this apply to the Mediterranean region? I would say that in this vision of the world that President Obama has, the region we are discussing is at the very heart of it. It is a region that is a little bit larger or much larger than the Mediterranean, as we, the Europeans, define it. This larger region certainly includes Iran and, of course, shows enormous concern toward Afghanistan. This region is at the core of President Obama's policy.

We need to remember that the first phone call Obama made as a president was not to a European leader, nor to a Chinese leader but to President Abbas and, since then, he has placed this region at the heart of his priorities. This becomes very clear if we analyse the speech he made in Turkey and, in particular, if we read his extraordinary and historical speech, in Cairo, about the Middle East and the world.

This implies a number of shifts in American foreign policy, which are very important for this region. I will merely concentrate on the shifts that concern the Mediterranean region in the larger sense.

The first is to end the war on terror. We need to interiorise this: to put an end to the war on terror. It should be pointed out that President Obama wants to fight a war on terror, but he does not conceive to speak about a war on terror in the sense it was referred to during the Cold War against the Soviet Union, something globalised and that becomes the paradigm of the entire security and international policy. Ending the war on terror means linking terror, the fight against terrorism, not to the military sphere, but to justice, police and intelligence service. This is the tradition of the fight against terrorism.

The second aspect that is very important for us is the fact that he has placed the Palestinian question in the centre of the Middle East equation. If you read Obama's speech in Cairo, he says very clearly that it is a central question. Beforehand, it was said to be an Israeli-Palestinian question, but this is the first time that an American president has claimed that a Palestinian question existed, and this is of central importance. Furthermore, in his speech he defines what the Palestinian question by pointing out that occupation in Palestine creates suffering, creates humiliation, and that there will be no solution until the end of the occupation. Of course this does not deny Israel's right to its security, just like any other state.

I would also like to talk about the role of Turkey. For President Obama, Turkey plays a very important role. Relations between Turkey and the United States were very difficult during the Bush years. Turkish public

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opinion, not to mention all the difficulties between Turkey and the United States in relation to the Iraq war. President Obama went to Turkey and he attached great importance to the role Turkey can play in this area.

Last but not least is the priority in changing perceptions of the USA in the Arab world. He knows that he cannot change such perceptions through speeches; he needs to change them by actions. This is an absolute priority in order to change the Arab world's attitude towards the USA. As far as the agenda of the US is concerned, they share the same concerns, but with different priorities and approaches. For the Americans, Europeans are essential for Afghanistan, for Iran, for disarmament and, in a certain way, for development. For the Europeans, Americans are essential for the Middle East, for climate change and for coexistence between nations, including in Asia.

To conclude, I would like to call on Europeans to change our attitude. We need to grasp this opportunity. We need to understand that with President Obama there is a window of opportunity that will not be there forever.

As the former Prime Minister of Egypt, Ahmed Maher, said recently in Paris, "We need to be aware that Obama cannot do it alone, he needs the support of others and he is not getting the support that he would like to have".

He is not getting the support from Israel, from the Palestinians, from the Arabs or from the Europeans that he needs to have. For the Middle East, if Europe is to help President Obama, Europe needs to do what he cannot do, for example, by engaging with Hamas or by bringing Turkey closer to our foreign policy. We need to develop a common foreign policy where Turkey is fully integrated. We need to be able to build a coalition with Turkey and with the Arab countries to support President Obama's Middle East Policy. Furthermore, in some areas we need to be more dynamic and more assertive than President Obama can be. Now it is the time.