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## **SECURITY FACTORS AND RESPONSES IN THE EMERGING MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGIC SETTING**

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During the Cold War, threats coming from across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe and the Western world in general were strictly related to the East-West confrontation. National security was not endangered by possible attacks from the Mediterranean or Middle Eastern countries as such but by the East-West escalation South-South conflict could be able to give way to. In this sense, the Arab-Israeli conflict was a central threat to Western security. What was frightening was not the military power of the regional countries but their alliance with the Soviet Union and the possibility of what at that time was called horizontal escalation (as opposed to East-West direct vertical escalation).

With the end of the Cold War and the 1990-91 Gulf War, South-South instability ceased to be a threat to Western and European national security. Crises in the Middle East could not give way to escalation any more. Furthermore, the likelihood of a war between the states of the Middle East was drastically reduced, first, by the end of the Soviet support to a number of Arab states and, second, by the successful intervention by the US-led international coalition against Iraq. As a consequence of the change in the balance of power of the region, the Arab countries and the Palestinians had to accept the establishment of a negotiating framework with Israel. The Madrid process was also reinforced by the Oslo accords between the Palestinians and Israel.

Instability in the Southern countries did not come to an end, however. It shifted from inter-state to intra-state sources. Arab governments proved to be too weak to be able to proceed to the necessary reforms in the economic as well as political realms. Governments resulted to have few popular support and weak legitimacy.

It must be noted that the Arab governments were opposed by their people not because of their authoritarian character and the lack of democracy but because they were considered responsible for having proved and still proving unable to oppose Western and Israel intrusion. As just noted, after the change brought about by the end of the Cold War and its implications, governments felt compelled to negotiate with Israel. Arab people, though, looked at these negotiations as an evidence of the defeat suffered by the Arabs at the hands of Israel and the West. This opposition, although nationalist in its character, was led by the growing influence and activism of religious parties and groupings.

A number of elections, in particular those in Algeria, made clear that incumbent authoritarian governments risked to be replaced by religious or nationalist extremists. The process of political reform was therefore stopped with the silent consensus of the Western governments. This development prevented extremists from going to power but left power in the hands of weak governments unable to proceed to badly needed political and economic reforms. For these reasons, in the last ten years instability in the south of the Mediterranean could not be eliminated - neither its economic nor its political roots.

Now, this instability generates spill over effects that affect European and Western security. While no military threats come from the South any more nor can it affect national security in the North, a number of spillovers deriving from Southern instability affects Northern security in a broader sense, that is European long-term security (threatened by WMD proliferation) and European order, its cultural and social fabric (threatened by immigration, islamism and terrorism). How have Europe and the West responded to this situation during the 1990s?

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The Western governments have provided essentially two main responses: (a) the Middle East Peace Process, reinforced by the subsequent Oslo accords; (b) the Euro-Med Partnership. While the Middle East Peace Process is a conflict resolution process aimed at providing a specific short-term solution to an ongoing conflict, the Euro-Med Partnership is intended to provide long-term multidimensional responses to instability in a conflict prevention perspective.

Both processes have tried to introduce stability in the region. The Middle East Peace Process has tried to introduce stability by solving a conflict that is a main source of frustration for Arab people, a stumbling block in Western-Arab and Western-Muslims relations and an obstacle to the strengthening of moderates and democrats as well as domestic political reforms. The Euro-Med Partnership, with its baskets devoted to political dialogue, economic development and social cooperation, has offered a multiple response to short-term sources of instability, as development, poverty, emigration and a set of soft-security issues, like trafficking and organized crime.

The two processes resulted strongly intertwined because, while the Euro-Med Partnership framework tries to put the conditions for a long term cooperative approach by means of the application of reforms, the Middle East Peace Process tries to eliminate the root causes of the political weakness that makes governments unable to proceed to reform and gradually get rid of their authoritarianism. Both processes have tried to replace a pervasive military culture by a culture of civilian cooperation, by providing non military responses to instability.

Developments have illustrated, however, that the success of the Middle East Peace Process was a condition for that of the Euro-Med Partnership. The collapse of the former has brought about a significant weakening of the latter. The collapse of the Middle East Peace Process and the weakening of the Euro-Med Partnership, however, cannot be regarded as a modest incident in a course of affairs that can continue with some alterations only.

These developments must be regarded, in contrast, as the beginning of a substantive change in the strategic environment relating to the southern approaches to Europe. A strategic turnabout This change has been consolidated by the 11th September terrorist attacks to the United States.

Are changes underway asking for different responses to Southern instability and other problems coming from these regions? Are the cooperative responses provided by the West and Europe in the 1990s now obsolete?

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To answer this question, we have to appreciate the two changes mentioned about: the collapse of the Middle East peace process and the American foreign policy that is currently being shaped by the 11th September attacks.

For ten years after the end of the Cold War, the Southern approaches to Europe beyond the Mediterranean Sea were apparently advancing towards a difficult still possible pacification.

The Middle East Peace process and the Oslo process, initiated in the first part of the 1990s and supported by the establishment of the Euro-Med Partnership, have proved unable, however, to solve long-standing conflicts in the Middle East. With the assassination of Mr. Rabin and the subsequent elections of Mr. Netanyahu in the mid-1990s, it became clear that the implementation of the Oslo solution was fiercely opposed in both the Israeli and Palestinian camp and a strong vicious circle bred by both sides' extremism was starting to work. The failure of the Camp David II talks made it visible and accelerated a process of disruption that, as a matter of fact, was already going on and just waiting for an occasional cause to burning out. The Palestinian insurgency and its violent suppression by Israel; Palestinian terrorism and the Israeli military re-occupation of the Palestinian autonomous territories are the now-fully-working vicious circle we have just talked about.

There will be all the time for historians to understand what went wrong with these processes. It is not the task of this lecture to analyze such question. What we have to underscore, however, is a first profound change in the southern European approaches' strategic picture. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is still there. The chances for its solution rather than improving are now worsening. After ten years work, rather than obtaining from the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict the wished for strengthening of the Arab governments, their increased ability to introduce reforms, and the stabilization of the region, the West risks to assist to a further weakening of the Arab regimes, an increased power of religious and other extremist groups, and instability and conflict. This is the first feature of the changing Mediterranean strategic picture.

The second important feature is the change in the overall American security perceptions as a consequence of the 11th September terrorist attacks and the impact of such change on US foreign and international security policies.

The new American President has brought to the power an administration with a profound unilateralist culture and, in particular, strongly concerned by the possibility of direct attacks to the United States based in recent progresses by a number of Third World countries in acquiring weapons of mass destruction and the vehicles for them to be delivered.

While the Clinton administration had gradually relaxed similar attitudes by signing the International Criminal Court treaty and dismissing the notion of rogue states and the National Missile Defense project, the new George W. Bush administration has reversed Clinton's policies and has taken up the notion of rogue states. He has made such notion central to its foreign policy vision by talking about an "axis of evil". He has restored the National Missile Defense concept and, most recently, has called back US adherence to the International Criminal Court treaty, with consequences on international peace support operations which may prove very damaging.

The 11th September attacks have fulfilled Bush administration's perceptions of a direct and imminent military threat to America itself. The 11th September events, apparently carried out by the Al Qaida terrorist network established by Mr. Osama bin Ladin, have thus legitimized and set in motion an overall war against terrorism and those rogue or evil states that are reputed and suspected to support it.

The new American foreign and security policy is the policy of a country involved in a deadly war to defend itself against powerful and insidious enemies. Because of this perceived overwhelming threat to American national security, US foreign policy is now based on a categorical demand for alignment - with us or against us - and a number of steps that prioritizes short-term American vital interests with respect to long-run Western or international interests, as for instance the inclusion of Russia in the NATO process, the support to Pakistan, the lifting of sanctions on India and Pakistan which very aptly attempted to dissuade the two countries from developing their nuclear arsenals.

A second aspects of the new American policy is the centrality of the struggle to terrorism. US relations with other countries, be they allied or not, are guided by cooperation against terrorism. A third aspects is the struggle against the rogues states, that support terrorism, use the latter to attain their goals against the US and their allies, and are prepared to use weapons of mass destruction in combination with and addition to terrorism. An important consequence of such concentration on terrorism is the continuity between the struggle against terrorism conducted by means of constabulary instruments within individual countries and that conducted against rogue states by military means proper, that is between domestic and external environments. To a transnational threat a transnational response is stimulated, with unpredictable consequences in terms of international law.

A final aspects of the post-11th September US policy is unilateralism. Friends and allies are categorically asked to help. However, whether and how they can help is a decision the US retain for itself. The most glamorous manifestation of such unilateralism has been the fact that NATO allies have been requested to activate Art. 5, but after having activated the military mechanism of the Alliance for the first time in history, they were rather kept aloof from military decision-making and operations in Afghanistan than called to participate in them (admittedly, something they seemed hardly fond of). The US ask for help but strictly under conditions established unilaterally. To go back to ancient Roman concept, in the new world war on terrorism the US is looking energetically for *auxiliares* rather than *soci*.

In sum, there are two major changes on the Mediterranean West's fringe line: (a) the collapse of Middle East Peace Process, the cornerstone of the Western stabilization strategy in the 1990s; and (b) a drastic change in the American security perceptions that suggests a military-first response to instability from the South on a global basis and from a unilateralist perspective (a change that concerns both the Mediterranean strategic landscape and the outlook for transatlantic relations).

These two changes are related to one another. First, the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is regarded by the United States as nothing more than a local outburst of the ongoing global terrorist trend. Second, the conflict for Palestine, so far central to solve the question of Middle East regional stability, is being sharply

downgraded. Palestine is now ranking very low in US security interests. The Rose Garden speech is less conspicuous for its debatable recipes than for its indefinite postponement of the issue and its delivering to whatever its Israeli management may be.

This perspective puts to the European states many problems. Such problems are not entirely new. In the present situation, however, they look like especially thorny issues.

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In the European view - as very aptly stated by Commissioner Chris Patten in the "Financial Times" - to serious problems with important and determinant political roots the American approach provides an only-military and inadequate response. The outburst of terrorism stems first from unsolved political conflicts. These unsolved political conflicts set in motion national-inspired terrorism, as in the case of Palestinians, or provide an opportunity for establishing transnational terrorist networks, as in the case of Al Qaida. For sure, solutions provided to these conflict would never manage to be entirely satisfactorily and, for this reason, would never eradicate terrorism. They would provide, however, a solid base to acquire and increase people's consensus around peaceful policies and legitimate governments. In this sense, the downgrading of the Israeli- Palestinian issue is regarded by the Europeans as a serious mistake, because this issue has a strong symbolic value, going well beyond Palestine, and its solution would definitely contribute to weakening terrorism and extremism in Palestine itself and in the whole of the Arab-Muslim world.

The Europeans consider with concern also the struggle against the rogue states and the exposure of an axis of evil including Iraq and Iran. A military attack on Iraq would take place in a very different context from that of 1990-91. Such attack could destabilize some Arab regimes and weaken everywhere - in the Arab countries and Iran - moderate, potentially liberal forces. In any case, it would submit them to further increased pressures by domestic terrorism and political radical opposition. West's strong military intrusions as well as biased policies towards the Palestinians do translate into more repressive and authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, a result that is opposite to that Europe is looking for in order to diminish instability and start reforms.

As global and worldwide as this new strategic perspective may be, the European countries cannot overlook that it may have a special and more intense impact on the Southern areas beyond the Mediterranean Sea, in particular North Africa and the Middle East. The long-standing spillovers from this area - we have already talked about - may acquire a new weight and further impact:

Admittedly, the impact and nature of spillovers from the South must be reconsidered in the light of 11th September developments. Europe's logistical role and its relevance as a target have decidedly changed with respect to recent past. Since the 1970s, Europe has worked as a logistical platform for political activities, including terrorism, aimed essentially at North Africa and the Middle East. Increased migration flows and the settlement on European soil of Muslim organized communities and institutions have more and more facilitated this logistical role. On the other hand, Europe suffered many spillovers from terrorism. Only very seldom, however, it was a direct target. In contrast, the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> evidence suggests that Europe is becoming a target - maybe a minor one with respect to the United States - as well as a logistical platform directed not only at North Africa and the Middle East but also to the United States and Europe. In

this perspective, and pending an increasing exposure to migration, Europe's proximity to North Africa and the Middle East, previously almost neutral in its effects, may now have an impact on Western security and requires policies suited to manage such proximity.

These policies ask for more intelligence (in particular "humint"), good legislation, police cooperation and, broadly speaking, more international coordination and harmony among Western nations. They ask also for defense capabilities, for instance against biological and chemical attacks, that are today almost non-existent in the majority of the European states.

The European Union is called to make a special effort of integration and coordination. As a matter of fact, growing Southern instability and emigration with their connections with terrorism ask for a quick and deep integration in bringing to bear what is called in the EU jargon a "common space of freedom, justice and security". In the new strategic setting, such common space is central to EU (and not only EU) security. The EU cannot achieve it only gradually or imperfectly. If so, it would be better to go back to traditional national legislation, for an ineffective common space would otherwise become a stumbling block in terms of security.

At the same time, these policies should not boil down to the creation of a European or Western fortress against external turmoil and sufferings. There are political and human problems to solve. If they are not solved, all Western military might would not suffice to give us the stability and tranquillity we wish nor the high moral responses we have successfully applied to our Western world after the Second World War and it is high time we make applicable to the rest of the world as well.

## **Attachment**

What follows is the paper presented by the lecturer to the international conference on “The Global Strategy”, Priverno, Castello di San Martino, 15-18 May 2002, organised by the Centro Studi-CEAS per la lotta al terrorismo e alla violenza politica

### **ASYMMETRIC STRATEGIES AND TRANSNATIONAL RISKS IN THE EURO-MED CONTEXT**

#### **Asymmetric strategies: terrorism and other attacks**

In the Euro-Atlantic vision, an important set of perceived risks involve damage that can be inflicted by low-intensity violence - such as sabotage, disruptions in supply and logistical control of vital resources and, more broadly speaking, any kind of terrorism. What brings these risks together is that they are all expressions of asymmetric strategies and constitute paradigms whereby war and coercive diplomacy are carried out by actors weaker than their perceived enemies. There is no doubt that the Mediterranean and the MENA region are among those areas in the world where the West is largely perceived by state and non-state actors alike as an intrusive oppressor. These actors confront Western countries, in particular the United States, as enemies or hostile entities and, being much weaker, use asymmetric strategies.

In implementing such strategies, terrorism, for example, can give way to direct attack or to spill-over effects. Traditional terrorism aims primarily at domestic targets, although it may also be directed against domestic targets owned by or otherwise linked to European and Western countries or even conduct attacks within these countries themselves. Conceptually, these kinds of direct attacks must be distinguished from the concept of spill-overs. Spill-overs consist, more properly, of terrorist activities taking place on European or Western territories for logistical reasons - the murder of adversaries located in Europe; recruitment, the organisation of bases, for example. In these cases, European and Western countries are not an object of attack but merely an environment in which such attack occurs.

Direct attacks on Europe and Western countries can also come from what has come to be called “new terrorism” as well. The difference between this and traditional terrorism (broadly conducted by sub-state actors in a nationalist, ethnic or religious perspective) relates to the fact that new terrorism attacks are carried out by sub or super-state actors either for non-traditional reasons or as a service to effectively covert (“rogue”) state or even non-state entities. The similarity is that both new and old terrorism use asymmetric techniques to strike at stronger actors and call upon similar motives for their activities, such as perceived interference, injustice or oppression. In principle, therefore, the new terrorism can also generate spill-overs as well.

It must be noted that the distinction between attacks and spill-overs may be difficult to maintain in specific cases, but is still very important in terms of the response to be provided. If a European or Western country suffered what would be regarded as a direct attack internally or externally, it would be entitled to a defensive response by using



coercive and military instruments, whereas spill-overs would legitimate no more than police responses or other non-military security measures. If common Western “vital” interests were attacked, NATO could feel it legitimate to respond in military terms. This is not the case with the European Union, which would only be prepared to respond to spill-overs instead and, to that end, has initiated a set of internal and external policies of cooperation and prevention.

Thus European Union risks with respect to asymmetric strategies can only be effectively analysed on the basis of the distinction made between direct attacks and spill-overs. Is Europe exposed to direct attacks as well as spill-overs, or is it more exposed to the latter or the former? The quantitative evidence<sup>1</sup> set forth in current information available from published sources suggest that European risk is less affected by direct attack than by spill-over effects. This is due to two main reasons: geography and Europe’s - in particular the European Union’s - inability to operate globally as an international Westphalian-style actor.

Europe has always been important logistically for nationalist and Islamist terrorists and their covert activities. The contemporary Union, with its Schengen area for free population movement, is even more useful for terrorist logistics because it constitutes an environment in which terrorists can move more easily.

On the other hand, actors in both the old and new terrorist paradigms believe that the source of their perceived oppression and the predominant supporter of their immediate enemies (Israel and corrupt Arab regimes) is the United States as a global power, for Europe is only a second-level actor. In consequence, targeting Europe is, in general, ineffective in political and utilitarian terms. Direct attacks on specific European interests do occur, but their number and importance is not significant. In recent years, these attacks were very few and specifically targeted - for instance, Algerian attacks in France in 1994-1996, which reflected Algerian perceptions of French political involvement in their ongoing civil war.

It certainly should not be forgotten that attacks directed at non-European countries such as the United States or Israel, or against Allied interests and facilities such as NATO bases, may take place against targets located on European territory. It may also be the case that these attacks involve Europe’s direct political interests as well and, for this reason, could be regarded as direct attacks. Otherwise, they would be regarded as forms of spill-overs and, in any case, these possible developments do not change the basic fact that Europe, as a non-global power, is more likely to be affected by spill-overs than by direct terrorist attack. This situation stems not only from the objective facts but also from Europe’s self-perception as a non-global power. An increasing number of Union members do not conceive of the Union as a global actor with power attributes or are plainly against such a concept. This vision may easily be strengthened by the Union’s enlargement policy towards countries in Eastern Europe.

“The United States,” as an American analyst points out<sup>2</sup>, “will move into the 21st century as a pre-eminent, global power in a period of tremendous flux within societies, among nations, and across states and regions. ... To the extent that the United States

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<sup>1</sup> E.G.H. Joffé), International implications of domestic security, EuroMeSCo Papers No. 9Lisbon, (2000

<sup>2</sup> Ian O. Lesser, “Countering the New Terrorism”, in *Countering the New Terrorism*, Rand, Santa Monica (CA), 1999., pp. 85-144.

continues to be engaged as a global power, terrorism will have the potential to affect American interests, directly and indirectly.” This objective will be achieved by limiting America’s freedom-of-action; threatening long-standing American diplomatic and political objectives such as the Middle East Peace Process; destabilising allies, such as Egypt, Israel and Turkey; and hindering the struggle against trans-national risks, such as trafficking and crime. This is not the case with the Union, which may, for example, be afraid of spill-over effects into its territory eventually triggered by terrorism in Egypt and Israel/Palestine but feels much less affected by their destabilisation as regimes. Individual European Union members may be concerned, but not the politically undeveloped Union of which they are members.

In current circumstances, it must be concluded that, in general, the European Union and, more generally speaking, Europe are exposed to non-negligible risks of spill-overs from new-style and - more likely – old-style terrorist activities in countries around the Mediterranean basin, but the risk or threat of direct terrorist attack seems less important. This conclusion do not mean that terrorist activities will not take place in Europe, the latter being largely exposed to spill-overs. It means that Europe will remain less a direct than indirect target for terrorist activities. Something, however, that is not be neglected indeed.

### **Trans-national risk and immigration**

The term “trans-national risk” refers to international non-state factors that affect internal security, in particular domestic order and prosperity. They do not affect national security directly but, by affecting the stability of the domestic social and cultural fabric, they may undermine national security in a broader sense. Such risk essentially reflects organised crime, terrorism and migration and is usually referred to as “soft security”.

The multifarious activities of international organised crime involve the smuggling of drugs and people, money-laundering and, more recently, cybercrime<sup>3</sup>. Terrorism is usually included in this rubric as well, although “new terrorism” seems more consistent than traditional terrorism with the kind of trans-national activities discussed here. Whatever the kind of terrorism included in the notion of trans-national risk, terrorism overall is the most important kind of asymmetric strategy generically involved in strategic risk for Europe. Organised crime is also a significant risk because of its size and ramifications. Its impact on European societies is devastating but, in Europe, the debate on soft security and associated risks to European society is much less concerned with terrorism and organised crime than with migration, both illegal and legal. Is immigration indeed a risk for European security?

The analysis here of the links between immigration and security notes that the presence of large immigrant communities may apparently support the logistical structure of terrorism, although, in reality, the process is far more complex and generally relies on established communities, whether or not of migrant origin, rather than on transient migrants. Furthermore, social deprivation and poverty can facilitate recruitment and

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<sup>3 3</sup> See Thierry Cretin, “Les puissances criminelles. Une authentique question internationale”, in T. de Montbrial, P. Jacquet (sous la direction de), *Ramses 2001*. , Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Dunod, Paris, 2000, pp. 135-154.

support, although this is far more typical of settled communities suffering social and political discrimination as the Banlieusard phenomenon in France made clear in the mid-1990s. These risks are obviously higher with illegal than with legal immigrants, involving not only terrorism but also organised crime. It is clear, however, that in these cases the immigration process is not a risk in itself but constitutes a medium through which terrorism and organised crime operate so that they continue to be the real issues at stake. In any case, in terms of response, this means that receiving countries need less to constrain immigration than to increase police and intelligence efforts to counter terrorism and organised crime. In addition, as part of the general process of improving the social and political environment, they should reduce illegal immigration and attenuate social deprivation among immigrants and settled communities by appropriate measures of integration and inclusion.

In conclusion, migration in itself cannot be considered a risk in any meaningful sense, for risk arises, instead, from Europe's inadequate political and administrative capacities to manage effective migration policies. This is due to historical and cultural reasons but the task is also complicated by the European Union's transition to a common legal and human space and will be compounded by enlargement. While immigration is a Europe-wide trend which operates at the trans-national level, so that member-states have only a limited grasp of the phenomenon, coordination at the European Union level is only beginning and cannot yet cope with the full implications of migration. It must be noted that this is also true for organised crime. Indeed, in general, trans-national risk is difficult to handle at the national level because of the asymmetry between its internal impact and its external origin. The sluggish European transition towards a super-state union magnifies this asymmetry. Thus, the real risk today is not migration but national European state and European Union inability to accommodate and regulate its flows.