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"POLITICO-MILITARY EVOLUTION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA"

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THE MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS: EVOLUTION IN THE BALANCE OF POWER
AND PROBLEMS OF MANAGEMENT

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The balance of power in the Mediterranean is difficult to define for it is made up of diverse, and not easily integrable, sectorial balances.

To reduce the Mediterranean problem to a USA-USSR confrontation would be to underestimate the continual interaction in this area of a vast number of internal variables and interests which do not necessarily make reference to the east-west parameter. It would be just as misleading to limit an interpretation to conflicts between north and south: between developed and developing countries. Even though the south European countries participated in colonial history in the past and are today connected with the industrial world by political, institutional, economic and military ties, they are not entirely a part of the "north". Their problems of internal stability, economic development and political culture are very similar to those of the "south".

These vast numbers of variables interact in times of crisis, but do not usually follow the same pattern.

That is, in the Mediterranean there is no "dominant factor". In western European history the problem of continental domination first and European unity later were clearly the core of the historical process. In USA-USSR relations the nuclear dimension is still predominant. In the north-south confrontation the problem of economic development is at the center. The Mediterranean area is affected by all these questions.

The Mediterranean area is therefore characterized by its susceptibility to an enormous and varying series of conflicts. In the past years, to name only a few, there have been the colonial conflict, the Arab-Israeli wars, the east-west conflict, the problem of development, the political use of oil, the economic use of oil, the Cyprus conflict, numerous internal coups and both political and institutional changes. In all these cases, and in still others, there has been no real "crisis management".

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE USA

Schematically arranging to the utmost the relative forces, the United States comes first. The American government has the advantages of:

- the major military force (aerial-naval of the area);
- the widest ranging network of alliances (bilateral and multilateral);
- moderate dependence on Middle East oil;
- political "centrality" in almost all of these conflicts: in contrast to the USSR it has relations with all the states of the Mediterranean and Middle East area, and is therefore able to play the role of mediator;
- economic and technological capacities which permit it to provide economic and military aid to any country, superior in quantity and quality to what any other power could offer.

The United States is the only power in a position to intervene in all Mediterranean crises even though it is not dependent on this area. However, until now, it has not been able to prevent or dominate the course of the various crises.

Numerous reasons for this can be cited:

- Soviet military competition prevents the USA from using their military superiority unrestrainedly, and provides the Mediterranean states with an alternative which, if not equal, is at least comparable;
- the American government has not yet shown that it has full control over international economic policy equal to that which it has over military policy;
- internal political evolutions at various levels have made politico-military alliances with the Mediterranean states critical on several occasions;
- the politics of important internal pressure groups and conflicts between Congress and the White House have greatly diminished the executive's freedom to act;
- in any case, it is difficult to stabilize and organize the coexistence of the many new nationalisms which are born and assert themselves in the Mediterranean area.

For these and other reasons the American government, obliged by its pre-eminent position to intervene in all Mediterranean conflicts, has never in the last ten years

come out completely victorious. On the contrary, it finds itself in a strange and contradictory situation:

- it has maintained and possibly increased its network of political relations (especially in the Middle East region);
- it has seen its strategic tranquillity diminish sharply, undermined by the progressive abandonment of bases, by the Cyprian crisis, by the hesitations of Greece and Turkey, by the events in Portugal.

The increasing importance of America's power in comparison to that of its allies, has reduced the number and the margins of consultation. Preliminary consultations are more and more frequently being replaced by summaries of what has already happened. That was of little importance while the international situation was more or less stable. Instead, in a period of mutations, it has the effect of further isolating the superpower. For example, during the Kippur war, American decisions were not duly agreed upon with the European allies whom they sought to involve fait accompli. This increased resistences and fed anti-American dissidence. This reveals the absence or the non-functionality of the organs of consultation between the allies, and the non-existence (or the non-conformity of facts) of a rational and complete system of contingency planning. And above all it highlights an important characteristic of the Mediterranean crises: their rapidity.

INSUFFICIENT INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Crises normally arise from antecedent situations and from unresolved problems which reach maturity. The peculiarity of Mediterranean crises seems to be that they almost always mature rapidly and violently, at times becoming highly dangerous for the world balance of power almost overnight.

Government crises are likely to develop into institutional crises. National conflicts rapidly lead to armed intervention. The economic disagreements carry with them prospects of economic war.

It seems evident to me that this can not be glibly attributed to a particularly "bellicose" nature character-

istic of the peoples of this area. It seems to me instead, that here, in all its gravity, we have proof of the absence of international "clearing houses" which permit agreement before conflict, mediation before the battle field.

This post-war period has been characterized by the attempt to organize such "clearing houses": that is, by the attempt to establish international institutions and laws. However, on the one hand, these institutions have been progressively moving towards a breakdown, and on the other hand they never seem to have found their ideal field of action in the Mediterranean.

A rough outline of the casuistry of these organizations can be sketched.

- Some (for example, those of the UN) are going through a profound political crisis, owing to the desire of some, numerically the majority, to use them only for demonstrative or confrontation ends. The other countries, once they have become dominant in the organization, make no effort to rivitalize them and are content to see them progressively degenerate. These organs therefore lose both their directional efficiency and their capacity to act as mediators between different propositions.
- In others, there is centralisation about a dominant pole (the USA or the USSR, as is the case in NATO, the Warsaw Pact, Comecon and now in the International Energy Agency). On the one hand, this rouses the suspicion that they are used for imperialistic ends, and on the other hand, their multilateral function is weakened to the point of creating what we might define as a "multi-bilateral" model: an apparently multilateral context provides the frame for a series of fundamentally bilateral relations between the superpower and its single allies. The weakness of such a frame of relationships is that it leads to a lack of autonomy and flexibility in international organizations: they cannot deal directly with the crises they should theoretically manage, and so they delegate them to the superpower, which uses its bilateral channels of intervention.
- Finally, other organizations, and this is the case of the EEC, a relative novelty among the multilateral international organizations, attempts to let national sovereignty

and supernational needs coexist. That is, political and institutional projects are elaborated, taking for granted the growth of national powers, and these inevitably clash with the member states, unwillingness to delegate effective authority. The dialectics between national states and national institutions ends up absorbing almost all the attention of the organization, with paralyzing effects on its policy and on its developments.

As a result of all this, the international system, taken in its complex, loses its managerial capacity. In the international organizations this favors both a policy of postponement and "technocratic" disputes between the various organs, each eager to appropriate the others tasks. On the other hand the size and complexity of the problems to be tackled makes vain a merely "technocratic" approach. They can not be solved through the restricted possibilities of initiative of the actual organs. Delegating the matter to who can act, that is, to the superpowers, therefore becomes the normal conclusion of the procedure. In this way we find today the prevalence of mere balances of power to the detriment of multilateral discussions and compromises.

In the Mediterranean the general crisis has become more acute because there is no forum (apart from the UN) which can provide mediation between ex-colonial areas, the Middle East, and the west Euro-American area. The first attempt to develop such a forum will be the trilateral conference between oil-exporting countries, industrial and developing nations. It will be vitiated, however, by a strong conflict of interests and policies (especially the latter), by an excessive reduction to only the energy aspect and to a geographical dimension that makes it more global than regional. One of the key problems of Mediterranean policy will not be dealt with starting from the region itself, but according to a global point of view. This is justified by the fact that the energy problem is in itself a global problem. But the political origins of that problem (the concentration of the greater part of the world's oil reserves in the Middle East, the underdeveloped economy of the exporting countries, the Arab-Israeli conflict) are typically local problems. Thinking that the general problem can be resolved without first resolving its local dimension is an example of bad management.

On the other hand the alternatives elaborated locally seem equally unsatisfactory. For example, the "Euro-Arab dialogue" between the EEC and the Arab countries (or the almost aborted "Mediterranean policy of the EEC") has neither political breathing space nor the dimensions (it is restricted to commercial and aid policy, with the exclusion of oil!) necessary to constitute a "stability framework" to which the crises of the area can be referred.

The difficulties of the international institutions are increased by the extreme variety of groupings in which the Mediterranean is divisible. While in Europe there is more or less an identity in the economic, political and military field and there is a net prevalence of division between east and west in all other possible divisions, in the Mediterranean we can find, without much difficulty, an enormous number of subdivisions, all more or less of the same importance.

From the strategic military point of view we have:

- an east-west division
- a "gray" area between east and west
- an Arab-Israeli region
- a Greek-Turkish-Cypriot region
- the Balkan region with its particular national conflicts
- the Maghreb region (inter-Maghreb conflicts, conflicts with Spain, Libya-Maghreb)
- Libya-Egypt, Egypt-Sudan, Egypt-Saudi Arabia
- Persian Gulf region
- the regions of the Arab peninsula (only partly identifiable with the preceding)
- the Ethiopic-Somalian region and the Red Sea region
- the Asia-Middle East region (the CENTO nations and Afghanistan)
- national conflicts (the Kurds, Palestinians, Eritreans, Basques, etc.)
- etc.

From the economic point of view we have:

- a European region
- a Mediterranean region
- a south European region
- an Arab region
- the oil-exporting Arab countries with possibilities of internal development
- the oil-exporting Arab countries without possibilities of internal development
- the Arab and Middle East countries with possibilities of internal development (with or without oil)
- the Arab countries without possibilities of development (with or without oil).

Such subdivisions can be extended to social, cultural, institutional and other fields.

No international organization is today able to manage this complex range of relationships so as to have one of the possible divisions prevail over all the others. The intersecting of these divisions destroys all possibilities of a necessarily limited technocratic approach. A concatenation of factors is easily created, until a virtually inextricable Gordian knot is formed.

WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The policy of the European States in the Mediterranean has been in the past characterized by a country-by-country approach, induced probably by past colonial experiences. This has led to the outlook that any political operation aimed at increasing the unity of the Mediterranean countries is a risk. Both the process of Arab unity and the more restricted process of unity among the oil-exporting Arab countries have been regarded with disfavor. Even the Maghreb community, traditionally praised in Europe for many years, has not really been favored by commercial or development aid policies. The maintenance of Libya as a state entity in itself was an operation similar in many ways to the creation, between the two wars, of the Trans-jordanian Hashimite kingdom. Semi-artificial states, with-

out traditional political unity or common history, and scarcely populated, formed a constant reference-point for a policy in many ways similar to that which kept the Italian seigniories of the Renaissance in equilibrium.

Today such a policy is no longer feasible. On the contrary, these semi-artificial states become a continual source of potential risk: they can suddenly evolve in a revolutionary direction, or just as suddenly have a serious internal crisis which at once has international repercussions. And, in any case, they no longer have the power and credibility necessary to play the role of "equilibrator" to which they were destined.

And therefore recourse to preferential bilateral agreements which link the European countries to one or another of the strong points (from Iran, to Saudi Arabia, to Algeria, etc.) has begun. Such negotiations have given different results at the economic level (at times favorable, at times irrelevant), but have generally been devoid of results at the political level, partly because no single European country has had sufficient bargaining power. The latter's interest in keeping on good terms with the Mediterranean countries was generally equal if not greater than the local governments' interest in such ties. Above all, because the local governments could count on a number of other alternatives offered to them by other European countries and the superpowers. And, since oil has become the prevalent part in such accords, the European countries' bargaining power has diminished even more:

- in comparison to the exporting countries
- in comparison to the USA which has more freedom of action and which runs fewer risks
- in comparison to the USSR, which is in a position similar to that of the Americans.

In fact, there was even the risk (evident during the crisis resulting from the Arab embargo of 1973) of a "beggar your neighbour" policy among the European countries. In conclusion, the lack of a common Mediterranean and Middle East policy has had repercussions in the EEC, whose internal market mechanisms have fallen apart and whose process of political consultation has lost efficiency: after less than

two years of frenetic consultation, "courageous" pro-Arab declarations, the launching of "grands desigens" for the Mediterranean, the result was that eight out of nine community members accepted the new political framework of the IEA, while the ninth follows a policy of reluctant support.

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THE SOVIET UNION AND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Soviet policy also has important weaknesses. In the first place, the USSR has not got "stable" allies: with Albania's breakaway from the Warsaw Pact organization its only Mediterranean bases were lost. Its relations with the Arab countries are exposed to the changes of the political climate, they are conditioned by the way the Arab-Israeli conflict goes, and, from the military point of view, they do not offer counter-balances of notable strategic importance: the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean is virtually bereft of aerial coverage and adequately protected bases. Politically, Soviet intervention has only rarely been able to act autonomously. Generally it has been limited to taking advantage of internal dissent in the Atlantic or Middle East area, reinforcing the position of this or that single party.

The case of Egypt (and possibly Iraq in the near future if the recent Iran-Iraq accord becomes something more than a momentary expedient) reveals how little the USSR can expect from such policies. Its management capacity during a crisis is also scarce:

- because it is not in a position to unilaterally impose itself on local leaders
- because often it has not sufficiently good politico-diplomatic relations with all the parties involved in the crisis (it hasn't relations with Israel in the case of the Middle East, its relations with the Balkan states are difficult, it is not in a position to mediate between Greece and Turkey on the Cyprus question, etc.).

The Soviet Union is undoubtedly interested in having a stable situation in the Mediterranean, but it would like to be one of the pivots of the balance of power. Instead, its military and political presence in the area is limited to reducing America's freedom of movement, without however

becoming a resolute element of the crisis. For this reason the USSR is probably driven to supporting radical positions, such as those of the Palestinians and those of the Syrians and the Iraqi, that permit her to block the American step-by-step initiatives and propose a different negotiating forum (the Geneva conference) in which it hopes to play a more important part.

In reality however this position is contradictory. It would have sense if the USSR actually controlled the policy of one of the principal local interlocutors. On the contrary, it plays a part only as long as it supplies the necessary support to give credibility to the refusal to negotiate. When the negotiations begin, other interests will come to the foreground, and the mediation which will be needed can only be provided by the USA, and not by the USSR. There is therefore a notable oscillation in Soviet policy, from hard to soft to hard again, which is directly related to the superficiality of its ties with local leadership.

This not only influences American policy, but complicates inter-Arab policy as well, since it impedes the formation of a common platform about a dominant pole in the Arab world. As soon as an Egyptian-Saudi axis is formed the USSR intensifies its relations with the Palestinians and the Syrians, preventing the actual balances of power in the area from acting according to their nature. Instead, when there is confrontation, the interests of global equilibrium prevail over sectorial ones and with some hesitation the USSR tends to reform its direct link with the USA, in order to prevent the conflict from spreading. Even though this liason seemed particularly difficult during the '73 war, it was always maintained, and it acted in favor of a balanced conclusion to the war. In that case it benefitted the Arabs, but it is quite possible that Soviet behaviour would not have been different had the outcome of the war evolved too unfavourably for Israel, increasing rapidly the risk of escalation. Soviet intervention was "conservative": they were seeking a situation of equilibrium not unlike the initial one.

The traditional prudence of Soviet foreign policy, generally against excessively complicating the framework of the balance of power and favourable rather to direct Russo-American dialogue, favors step-by-step initiatives.

In opposition there remains the fact that the Soviets in such a dialogue do not have the Arab cards in their hand (it would seem in fact that at times the Arabs have some Soviet cards in their hand). In an equally critical situation, in South-East Asia, even though the USSR did not control all the Vietnam cards, Kissinger concentrated on a USA-USSR agreement in order to arrive at American disengagement.

However, in that situation there were:

- America's obvious incapacity to dominate the strategic situation
- a lack of direct relations between Washington and Hanoi
- the possibility of a Washington-Peking-Moscow triangle
- the willingness of North Vietnam to negotiate
- South Vietnam's political and military weakness
- a political crisis inside America on the Vietnam question.

It is very improbable that similar conditions will develop in the Middle East. In any case, trying to create them would be looking for a world crisis of dimensions certainly superior to those that the USSR has until now seemed willing to support.

SOUTH EUROPE AND THE USA

The strip of countries from Portugal to Turkey, that we can generically group under the term "South Europe" deserve special mention.

Militarily they are situated in the Mediterranean. The process of military security, relatively stable in Central Europe, has not been extended to the south. On the contrary, the technical evolution of armaments has privileged in these last years naval forces and long range nuclear vehicles: two types of armaments that require a military presence on the "flanks", and diminish the relative importance of the centre.

The failure of Kissinger's mission in the Middle East repropose the possibility of renewed fighting there (and hence the possibility of air lifts and naval reinforcements to Israel, the necessity of surveillance forces, the possibility of military intervention, the risk of direct super-

power confrontation), and enhances the role the USSR can play in the Mediterranean.

Such a situation explains the hardline reaction of the Americans, who unofficially suggest the hypothesis of Spain entering NATO, of a political realignment of the members of the Alliance, even at the cost of losing some of the more peripheric ones: such a strategy would have been unthinkable only a year ago. And possibly even today it is substantially unrealistic. But the fact that it can be formulated indicates how much the situation in the Mediterranean has changed. That has been confirmed at the economic level as well, by the general crisis of the South European countries, heavy importers of oil with serious internal problems of development and employment. Because of this their ties with central Europe are becoming ever more subordinate, while the prospects of a "structural policy" which reduces the gap between north and south Europe grow dimmer and dimmer as time passes. The Arab countries do not find their natural interlocutors in these weak countries, in their reduced productive capacities: instead they invest their capital in stronger financial markets that can risk heavy short term liquid investments, because they still have an economy capable of guaranteeing a certain recycling of such sums. All of southern Europe risk being on the losing end of the north-south capital transfer. It is true that the manufacturing multinationals still turn to this area, where they find relatively cheap labour and greater infrastructures than in the rest of the Mediterranean area. Such development is vitiated however by the growing difficulty of directing it towards social ends, and thereby provoking various types of political reactions. Furthermore, future organization of better financial markets and better infrastructures in the Arab world would make an inversion of this tendency very possible in the not too distant future.

Politically, all these countries, from Portugal to Turkey, are going through a difficult period of instability, not only of internal political balances, but also of institutional relations. The internal political prospects are confused: normal hypotheses of democratic changes are not at stake so much as more ambitious hypotheses of constitutional transformations, coups, changes of regime, or even modest and probably illusory socialistic revolutions.

In all sectors, southern Europe is greatly under the influence of transnational powers (from secret services to international politics, from multinationals to powerful ideologico-bureaucratic structures such as the Catholic Church, etc.). These forces are beyond the control of the national governments who, when they want to impose on them, can do nothing more than try (as they are experimenting in Portugal) a sudden closing of ideological, political and economic frontiers. This method is today all the more illusory because of the coincidence of various crises, economic and military, on countries which must per force give priority to the prospect of economic development if they do not want to risk falling to the point of an economic recession.

Crisis management in this area therefore becomes a very complex operation that must concentrate on forming consistent internal political majorities on a progressive slackening of military tensions and on economic development.

Since it is highly improbable that these three conditions can come about simultaneously it is necessary to concentrate on the most important factor: politico-institutional stability.

NATO's difficulties in the Mediterranean, the recurrent Balkan crises, the Cyprian crisis, have at their roots the lack of a solution to this problem. Governments, often illegitimate, at times fascist, and with precarious majorities, seek their justification at times in nationalistic rhetoric, in autocratic closures, in politico-military adventures. The structural weakness of their countries is such that these adventures may even transmute into the fall of the regime that proposed them: another element of uncertainty and crisis.

The adhesion to the Atlantic Alliance by some of these countries, or their alliance with the USA, provided them (especially in the Marshall Plan period) with an important reference-point. Without that reference-point even Jugoslavian heretic history would have been impossible. Today, instead, the economic, political and military gap between central-north and southern Europe, makes the Atlantic Alliance a vague landmark, probably insufficient.

We have already mentioned the crisis of international organizations, citing also the Atlantic Alliance. The latter in particular has never assumed in southern Europe those multilateral characteristics which, for better or worse, it has in central Europe. On the other hand, in the Mediterranean a local political equilibrium even remotely comparable to that established among neutral Atlantic countries and non-allied countries in northern Europe does not exist.

The modest attempts at multilateralization (participation in and maneuvers of the ACE mobile force, Navocformed, integrated commands, NADGE) have not noticeably influenced national divisions. The two cases of territorial contiguity (France-Italy and Greece-Turkey) have not been able to stand up to the wear and tear of time.

Perhaps the only exception in this framework is the NADGE, which continues to work in an integrated way. It as a matter of fact closely reflects the true nature of Atlantic relations in the Mediterranean: bilateral, between the single allies and the US (and their conventional and above all, nuclear military forces in this area). However, the US, as a reference-point, has all the weaknesses inherent in America's peculiar strategic position.

Domestic politics are assuming more and more importance in determining American decisions. Not all the consequences of this are positive. In the conflict between the White House and Congress there is a challenge to executive predominance which might appear as a refusal to condone the basest practices of American foreign policy. Congress usually appears as the bearer of democracy, civilisation and development. What happens in practice, however, is not American commitment to new foreign policy ideals. Instead, foreign policy immediately becomes subordinate to domestic politics. Between the two wars an analogous situation brought about stalinism in the USSR and the post-Wilson isolationism in the USA. Today the situation is different because it is unlikely that either of the two superpowers, the US in particular, can resort to isolationism. However, the prevailing domestic political climate tends to accentuate the fundamentally authoritarian characteristics of American politics: the gap between the centre and the

periphery, the bureaucratization and the rigidity of decision making (at the centre of which there is no room for the allies), the sacrifice of marginal interest in order to save the centre. The days of the great "prophetic" plans, seem to have been replaced by a policy of "egoisme sacré".

All this makes relations with the USA extremely problematic, in particular for the countries afflicted by serious internal crises. It is difficult to imagine American policy once again acting as the exemplary model for consolidating the politico-institutional framework of the south European countries.

In the last few years this European policy has been changing, even if the bilateral tendency still remains. The policy of the EEC has improved, both in relation to the Mediterranean countries and to the ACP (African-Caribbean-Pacific) countries. This also facilitates the prospectives for crisis management in the Mediterranean. We shall examine this in our conclusions.

NEW POWERS?

There are some new powers acting in the Mediterranean scenario. In some cases they are countries which exploit their particular position in order to condition superpower policy for national ends (Israel and Egypt). The greatest risk in these cases is that the nationalistic game may take hold of the local government, making the crisis ungovernable, favoring the proliferation of nuclear arms, etc. This maneuver is connected with the prestige they are able to draw from their protectors, and the deep divergences between the protectors.

Other countries instead, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, found themselves controlling at least one of the great levers of world power, and have therefore at least one of the attributes of a global power. To be sure, their policy is rather onedimensional: they haven't the freedom of movement, the multidimensionality, or the capacity of initiative of the real powers.

But in any case they can block the global system in at least one point.

It is difficult to speculate on the future develop-

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ment of these new powers. If the objective is economic development, as is the case with Iran and Algeria, it is probable that (as many projections have lately revealed) they will lose their freedom of movement, and will be tied to the way the energy market goes in an even more binding way than the industrial countries.

In other cases, for example in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Arab states of the Gulf, this objective does not have such top priority and, above all, does not involve all the resources of the country. The use of energy as a weapon can therefore become more discretionary.

Moreover, in all these cases, oil is a source of military weapon systems. This is macroscopic in the case of Iran, but is also evident in the other oil-producing countries. Arms are destined not so much to defend the wells as to increase the new powers' freedom of action, and to regulate the problem of reciprocal relations. Atomic proliferation is knocking at the door.

These contrasts must not however be exaggerated: the formation of the oil cartel, and the necessity of defending it, may lead to growing political coordination (as the Iran-Iraq accord seems to show).

The emergence of new powers may renew the problems and prospects of crisis management. Besides oil (which is the most important example, after that of nuclear diplomacy, of international management at a world level) the interests of these powers are limited to their region, the Middle East. There have already been indications of their role in the Arab-Israeli conflict: Iran, which is Israel's main supplier of oil, offered to guarantee Israel quantities of oil, at political prices, equivalent to those extracted from the oil fields of Abu Rudeiss, in the Sinai, if these fields were given back to Egypt. Saudi Arabia helped reinforce Sadat's diplomatic position in the Arab world; the Arabs of the Gulf financed various Palestinian organizations, etc.

The principal weakness of these new powers is their chronic lack of intermediate-level technicians and internal political activity equal to the task that could be attributed to them.

HYPOTHESIS FOR A NEW TYPE OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Reasssuming schematically the principal elements of the analysis made up until this point we have seen:

- the lack of a dominant factor in the Mediterranean area and that, at the different levels at which international politics can operate (military, political, economic, etc.), no country in the Mediterranean assumes greater importance than any of the others; their importance changes according to the international moment, to the particular crisis, etc.;
- the leading role played by the US in this area, characterized by a continual increase in military forces and political activity, but also by a decrease in strategic peace of mind (and perhaps by a decrease in its ability to influence internal situations);
- the lack of any effective European bargaining power, connected above all to the absence of common European policy;
- the limited role played by USSR;
- the politico-institutional and economic problems of southern Europe;
- the growth of new powers in the Middle East.

All this, which regards crisis management, happens at a time when we also note:

- the lack of contingency planning between the Western Allies
- the rapidity and violence of many Mediterranean crises
- a progressive deterioration of the multilateral instruments
- the involvement of local problems in global crises
- a possible development of neo-isolationism in American foreign policy
- the persisting equilibrium of deterrence in this area and the limited use of some bilateral USA-USSR rules for controlling conflicts
- the drive to nuclear proliferation.

The general picture is one of a general crisis in the international system which has reached a particularly acute point in the Mediterranean.

The persistence of deterrence is not in itself enough to assure the tranquillity of the area. On the contrary, crises originating in this area can have negative repercussions on détente.

Initiatives for a new type of crisis management must begin from the realization that some of the traditional instruments are obsolete, and that a pure and simple resort to force should be avoided.

Some of these initiatives have more than a Mediterranean dimension. Two are of particular interest:

- the management of the energy crisis. The constitution of the IEA and the convocation of the trilateral conference indicate a new multilateral approach to the problems of energy. The IEA and its programs give the industrial countries some bargaining power with which to confront the oil-exporting countries: this allows the opening of negotiations. The presence of fourth world countries means that both the oil problem and the problem of economic development can be tackled, getting out of the sterile confrontation of propositions to which the UN organizations have been reduced. Here the new powers are offered the possibility of playing a role in the global situation, and of thereby assuming greater responsibility in the management of the system.
- the review conference of the non-proliferation treaty. This brings the nuclear problem out of its privileged quarters (bilateral USA-USSR relations) into its more natural world dimension. This conference will verify the partial failure of non-proliferation. Nevertheless, it can also seek to raise the prospect of establishing new criteria for the control and diffusion of nuclear technology, and above all, can seek to relaunch the role of the multilateral organs in the control of crises. The push toward nuclear proliferation is directly related to the degeneration of the multilateral instruments' capacity for solving crises, and the growing faith in the use of force. All the major nuclear powers have preferred to resort to

unilateral intervention (of force or mediation) in times of crisis. The problem of nuclear security can be approached in a multilateral way, making operative, by way of a new treaty, the very vague principles outlined in the UN Security Council resolution, n. 255 (1968), regarding the guarantees given by the nuclear countries to the non-nuclear signatories of the NPT. Further measures might tend to privilege the signatories' access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, etc. Relevant counter-measures should be provided for, to be applied to the countries which violate the spirit of the treaty (whether or not they sign the treaty).

Along with a revitalization of these international organizations there must be a corresponding re-examination of the internal mechanisms of the Western bloc. A lack of contingency planning, the impenetrable nature of the American decision-making system, the technological evolution of arms, are only indications of the difficulty NATO has in adapting itself to the changing situation.

Centered as it is on the Atlantic, on central Europe and on nuclear weapons, NATO has been unable to develop a clear Mediterranean policy and resolve the problem raised by the changing politico-strategic relations.

This does not mean that it has become obsolete. It is however evident that its authority is even more limited than provided for in the Atlantic treaty. We have synthesized the problems of southern Europe as a problem of politico-institutional stability and economic development. Despite the diversity of the situations, Middle East problems are rooted in the same basic themes. NATO has lately been unable to provide answers to these problems. The US, the principal inspirer of Alliance policy, did it on its own for many years, but now its internal crisis makes it less and less capable and willing to assume this role.

Without politico-institutional stability and economic development in these regions, the strategic framework and the two principal multilateral initiatives (energy and non-proliferation) will probably be destined to failure.

It is possible that there is a new role for the

European community in the Mediterranean area. It has close economic relations with the countries of this area. (Italy is a member of the EEC and the other south European countries are or can be associated with the Community, commercial and technical aid agreements with the Mediterranean exist and are being negotiated, the embryo of a Euro-Arab dialogue exists, they have important relations with the countries of the fourth world). They can legitimately serve as the foundation for wider ranging political initiatives. The decisions made regarding the colonels of Greece (and in a more limited way regarding Franco's Spain) showed a certain democratic capacity, and make possible today a dialogue, without complexes, with the new Greek government (as it will allow with the future Spanish leadership and as is possible with the present leadership of Portugal, Yugoslavia, etc.) It is difficult today to think in terms of a "Marshall Plan": it would have to use, for the most part, funds from the oil-exporters and not from the Western countries. However, decisive initiatives in this direction might find unexpected echoes: the necessity of a new European interlocutor that allows the Middle East to avoid the dilemma of an east-west division and permits agreements based not simply on the criteria of force is felt by many (as Sadat himself recently confirmed).

It would mean making certain political choices which are not simple:

- singling out the preferential poles towards which the greatest effort would be made (countries capable of assuring credible development with or without oil);
- the elaboration of a clear platform of politico-institutional stability, of democratic guarantees, and of non-belligerence;
- the elaboration of inter-regional development programs which seek to redirect in a coherent way the present "industrialisation sauvage" (to use a term of the Tunisian Chedly Ayari) of the Mediterranean countries, to furnish some guidelines for multinational investments;
- the recognition of European strategic interests in the area, as such (and therefore not only increased political consultation but the creation of integrated standing

forces and a burden sharing scheme that would facilitate multilateral European presence in the area).

These and other initiatives, all linked with the possible development of a European pole, can be directed at establishing, if not a dominant element in the area (the American and Soviet presence would impede it), at least a political reference-point and a new politico-institutional model that would facilitate the amelioration of crisis management and would increase stability.

Without it, other possible hypotheses offer less consistent alternatives. The proposal of a conference on Mediterranean security (while the Arab-Israeli conflict continues) is not of great practical importance and neither is the idea of constituting inter-Mediterranean alliances. The relative weakness and instability of the regimes of this area makes such proposals, at best, useless expressions of good will. The Mediterranean area can not be autonomous because, among other things, it is not sufficiently homogeneous and has not the power to assure its political and economic development. A new type of crisis management, whatever it is, will have to include the participation of external factors and the re-evaluation of the role and importance of certain internal factors. Concentrating on the political and economic evolution of the latter is an operation which implies economic aid, security guarantees, political ties: that is, responsible action on the part of an external factor.

Without a European factor, and because of the weakness of the individual European states, the two superpowers will remain. We have already indicated some of their limits. There is no reason why, in the absence of other initiatives, they should not remain the effective arbiters of the Mediterranean situation.

If this is the case the situation could evolve in a number of ways: both a strategic retreat and a change in alliances are possible. However, local problems will continue to be undervalued because of the combined pressure of global problems and of the superpowers' internal

political problems. This may continue to prevent nuclear conflict but there will certainly be many examples of bad management, similar to those which have followed one upon the other in these past years.

In the long run, the absence of stable situations at the local level can not help but influence the process of détente, reducing the incentives for agreement and peaceful solution of conflicts.

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