

DOING BUSINESS WITH GREECE

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MEDITERRANEAN STABILITY - PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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The Mediterranean is an area divided in many different regions. The Mediterranean unity, even culturally, is a dream that ended over fifteen centuries ago, and that was never more a reality, nor was re-established even during the colonial period. That is why the "Mediterranean" stability is a very difficult argument, that would require a careful approach country by country, region by region, and much more time that we do not have here now. Therefore, you will allow me to be sketchy and provocative. I hope that questions will follow, that will help me to clarify some points, and you to concentrate on the arguments of your greater concern.

The Mediterranean already is a crisis and conflict area but new sources of conflicts will probably arise and complicate the Mediterranean picture even more in the near future.

First: Nuclear proliferation in the Mediterranean is a quite possible development - many reports speak of Israel's nuclear capacity. Turkey has spoken of possibly going nuclear, and it certainly may do so if its involvement in Cyprus enlarges the gap between Turkey and the West, Turkey may then become more involved in the Middle East, with the possibility that Egypt too may go nuclear.

Other countries can make the same choice, here in the Balkans, or elsewhere and that may revive even some Italian temptations, especially if our links with Nato are in doubt.

Second: The enlargement of economic rights over the sea up to the 200 miles limit will practically multiply the source of possible conflicts and will render it very difficult for military fleets to pass freely through the straits of the Mediterranean. Imagine also, a new Middle East conflict and the problems that commercial cargos with strategic or military material will have to face.

Third: The technological developments are favouring more precise armaments especially naval missiles, with conventional or nuclear warheads. The increased precision, lethality and rapidity of these weapons together with an increased ability in finding objectives, will increase the first strike capacity of the American and Soviet ships, so lowering the nuclear threshold. At least in the next years, the US ships will lower their speed and still be great and heavy, but if there is a shift to small, rapid vessels then the situation may change.

Even these examples alone make a point for Mediterranean onus control, and all Mediterranean agreements. Many ideas have been put out by economists and politicians, but they stop short of the main problems and crises existing in the Mediterranean area. It is now likely accepted that no disarmament or control agreement can survive in a changing political situation.

We will concentrate on the countries forming the southern belt of Europe.

These countries suffer at least from three different global divisions: East-West, North-South, Democratic and Autocratic countries. Each time the southern European countries are presented as "bridges" between North and South, "non-aligned" between East and West, or constitutionally weak and changing.

In reality their situation is not happy - generally the southern European countries in the post war years have experienced all the problems of displaced persons trying to identify themselves in greater, more stable, contexts but in fact resting on the borders of the main global divisions, ready to go out or to be pushed out.

We are all aware of the economic problems of southern European countries, and how difficult it is for them both to become integrated with the developed north, or to utilise the growing resources of the south.

Similar problems exist on a political level. We have experienced great changes of regimes, that I will only remind you of, without detailing them:

- Greece obviously (twice)
- Cyprus
- Turkey - that is changing rapidly even if it maintains the old constitutional framework.
- Portugal

We are now experiencing changes in:

- Italy
- Spain

In the near future we will eventually see changes in:

- Yugoslavia
- Albania

Someone is saying also in - France.

The global framework in which these changes are taking place is one of Western predominance, but that affirmation should be qualified.

Militarily the Western predominance in the Mediterranean is notable and practically unchallenged by the Russian fleet. But that predominance mainly based on the US VI fleet requires bases, facilities and assistance. In a word: allies. Without allies the American presence will become not only more costly, but eventually irresponsible. The key countries in that respect still are Italy and Greece (probably Spain or Portugal).

*impossible*

Politically the situation is more confused, and difficult. The American government is in a big constitutional crisis (relations between the President and the Congress) and in search of a new policy line. The Soviets seem more decided, but in fact both economic shortcomings and recession problems have slowed down their pace. It seems now clear from recent experiences in the Middle East and in Angola that the Soviet Union has the ability to intervene, directly or by proxy, in distant and important areas, but do not have as yet the power or the ability to maintain and impose her gains. Exactly the contrary seems to happen to the Americans.

A kind of unifying strategy for the Mediterranean, is the one provided by the military-strategic realities. It originates in Washington and Moscow primarily, and links the Mediterranean area to the East-West Conflict. The presence of the two fleets, the American and the Soviet one, is the clear indication of the existence of such linkage. But the Mediterranean countries and conflicts are not at ease in such a scenario. Many times we have crises that do not stem from the East-West conflict, or that cannot be reduced to it, eg the Middle Eastern crises, the Cyprus war, the Portuguese change of regime, the infra-Maghrebian conflicts, etc. It is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to re-organise these local conflicts and local political developments, along the main lines of the East-West division. To force such a realignment on local leaderships, can also be counter-productive, as was clearly demonstrated in the case of the early reactions of the American administration to the Portuguese situation. A similar case we have had in the US-Greece relations during the past colonel's regime.

What follows is a different outlook, from the local scene and from the outside capitals, of the same Mediterranean crisis: communications are often broken, and minor crises risk becoming major ones.

That is probably true for all the Mediterranean countries. The reasons for that are deeply buried in history, but can be summarised as follows. There does not exist any innerbuilt stability in the Mediterranean regions. Many times the neighbour is the major enemy; no-one has enough force to overcome his enemies alone; the Mediterranean regions do not have a clear political unity, around a well defined and dominant pole. The horizontal ties, the ties existing between these Mediterranean states, are far too weak, and cannot form a stable, indigenous, stability system.

The number and quality of vertical ties, those which link the single Mediterranean countries to external powers, are far superior to the number and quality of the horizontal ones. Even the internal political life of these countries is often regulated by the vertical policy lines, linking Mediterranean countries and outside powers. In the first few years after World War Two, the political forces of Southern European countries regarded their preferential ties with the USA or the USSR as a point of strength. Internal political balances in countries such as Greece or Italy, were based also on these preferential ties. The division between government and opposition forces coincided ideologically with the division between the Western and the Eastern bloc. At that time, in Southern Europe, there was a partial coincidence between internal and outside positions.

The situation is changing - In Portugal, Italy and eventually Spain the so-called "area of government" is enlarging, and no longer coincides with the divisions of the cold war period. Let me say, as an Italian, that it is almost comical to read from Italy, Kissinger's (or Rockefeller's) recent affirmations about the danger of the PC's joining the government. Not

because one can't agree with his analysis (even if I don't agree on many points) but because what Kissinger sees as an hypothesis to reject, has already been for several years a historical reality, not formalised in a government but working on the political forces level, and thus requiring not decisions of principle but concrete decisions of management.

In Greece and in Turkey too, new problems linked to the Cyprus situation and to the emergence of new political forces, make it impossible to go back to the ancient bloc solidarity, and requires a more careful approach.

For these reasons, the vertical ties, once an element of stability and reinforcement of the local governments, are now becoming less secure and stable. Sometimes they even favour the changes that they would like to avert.

A last, but not least, case in point: Yugoslavia and Albania. According to a simple East West division, blindly carried out to her extreme consequence, we should leave these countries to Soviet dominance. A consequence feared by these same countries, in contrast with our interests and not even hoped by the Soviets. But such was, to put things bluntly, the somewhat deceiving conclusion reached by Sonnenfeldt, the Kissinger aid, some weeks ago, on a purely theoretical base. Theory should accommodate better with European reality.

Summarising: The local Mediterranean countries are unable to agree and guarantee a credible Mediterranean stability, but the Superpowers' appraisal of the Mediterranean evolutions and crises is necessarily conditioned by global considerations (that is, by how the East West relations are going). They, therefore, tend to consider anything that happens in the Mediterranean as "eccentric", a risk to stability, a jarring note in the international panorama. They tend to reduce these variables to their policy constants, simplifying their analysis of the Mediterranean crises and basing their decisions on a few fundamental criteria (keeping the "balance of power", distinguishing between communists and anti-communists, etc) that turn out to be too far away from the actual internal realities of these countries to be able to work efficiently.

There remains, therefore, an atmosphere of general uncertainty. In such a situation of uncertainty the safest choice appears to be a flexible, ad hoc approach to the single problems. For example, the US seems ready to support some eastern communists (irrespective of Sonnenfeldt's opinions), but also to oppose the Italian ones and even support the persecution of the Spanish ones. The USSR contemporaneously theorises the "Cunhal line", has good relations with Spain etc. In diplomatic terms there is a net increase in the already accentuated bilateralism, which characterises the international relations of the Mediterranean countries with the Superpowers.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, for instance, the US bilateral relations with either Greece or Turkey remain the major element in securing the presence of the Atlantic Alliance in the region. The recent defence agreements, signed with Turkey at the end of March and with Greece in April, both provide for continuous American presence in these countries, in exchange for 1.7 billion US\$ of military assistance to the two countries. Congressional reactions to both agreements is reported to have been unfavourable. Rightly unfavourable, I may add, at least for one reason: these agreements, in exchange for a four years permanence of military bases, oblige the US to support an important military build-up in this rather fragile area.

In times of profound changes and crises such bilateral relations are insufficient to guarantee the stability of either the international alliances or the local governments. They do not even guarantee peace. Through these bilateral ties the superpowers become more, instead of less, dependent on local factors. In order not to throw away bases and money they feel obliged to support the policy choices of their local allies. When her two allies are in contrast between them, the superpower has no choice unless the freezing of the crisis, that favours not only the status quo, but also the fait accompli. As the Cyprus case clearly demonstrated.

These errors of the superpowers are partially justified by the reality of the Mediterranean countries. As we have said, they have very few common ties and it is difficult to imagine a multilateral system of security and stability, in the Mediterranean, less dependent on external intervention.

Any collective security pact in the Mediterranean, or even only for Southern Europe, would not only be an illusion, but a risk as well. There is no real force on which to base it, capable of resisting determined external pressures. The political situation and the institutions of the Mediterranean states are not sufficiently stable and are, therefore, exposed to all winds and capable of unexpected policy reversals. Finally, there is no common economic basis that could make this region independent of Northern Europe, the superpowers or Arab oil.

To think in only Mediterranean terms seems, therefore, nonsense. In fact, no country does and this is why we have underlined the importance of vertical political ties.

This does not mean, however, that there is no room for change. On the contrary we are facing important, sometimes violent changes, from Spain to Lebanon, from Italy to Yugoslavia. If there is no common framework that could act as a moderator of these changes, bringing them to new stabilities, we will face important crises: possibly a period of internal agitation and unrest, followed by international realignment (either following the traditional pattern or according to new alliances). There will be no real stability, but a continuous re-negotiation of bilateral agreements between the superpowers and the Mediterranean countries (on a beggar your neighbour basis). The important economic and social problems of these countries will not be solved (because there will not be for a period a stable, credible government), and agitation will increase. In other words, this scenario does not offer the political leaderships of the Mediterranean countries prospects of development and integration in a greater international context, even though it keeps alive the reality of all those transnational currents and international needs which hang like deadweights over the life of Mediterranean countries.

In a certain sense we are today faced with a dilemma analogous to the one in '48/49. In that period there was a current of thought in the US State Department (of, the opinions of George Kennan, at that time) which held it more advantageous to maintain bilateral ties with Italy and the other Mediterranean countries, without fitting them into the vaster multilateral context of an Atlantic Alliance between the USA and central-northern Europe. Today the problem is similar. Kissinger's policy exalts the "flexibility" of "ad hoc" relations, which in the short term facilitate relations between the USA and the countries of the Mediterranean (Southern Europe in particular), but which does not offer these countries an equitable future prospec-

tive for integration in an area of not only strategic, but also political and economic stability.

Nevertheless it would be erroneous to reduce Mediterranean prospects to a dilemma between subordination or chaos (or to subordination and chaos, as normally was). Especially in the past few years a third alternative has been taking shape, one which has been widely discussed and analysed by the political force of these countries: Western Europe. There is almost a "wild hope" on the Western European way, that characterises many political forces in Southern Europe, and has her supporters in the Arab states too. That can be easily understood. After years of division in an Eastern and a Western party, the political forces are trying to find some international perspective that can help to unite, instead of divide.

Western Europe already represents the other pole to which the South European countries are attracted (economically and politically). The continuation of the Euro-Arab dialogue, almost malgre soi, demonstrates the interest of the Arabs in new economic and political relations. If you come to my country, Italy, you will see that the prospect of growing European integration has worked as a stabilising factor on the political forces. It unites forces that were divided by the East West conflicts and help to integrate in the West the old pro Soviet forces. In these past years EEC policy towards Greece first and towards Portugal and Spain later, proves that Western Europe is well aware of the internal political debate and of the long-term possibilities and options of these countries. And so today the Common Market represents in a way the most important political link between these countries and the West: a substitute, but also at least partially an alternative to Atlantic ties which have been weakened or are in crisis.

The flexibility shown towards Yugoslavia and Rumania opens the way to better political relations with these countries as well. The approach to the Cyprus crisis has shown a greater awareness on local sensitivity: EEC has not acted, until now, in that crisis, but there are interesting plans to do so in the not too distant future. If they will be realised, the main advantage of the EEC will probably be its complete absence of military forces: the solution will follow economic lines, much more suitable for long lasting agreements.

From an economic point of view, obviously, integration of Northern and Southern Europe poses the big problems typical of relations between developed and less developed (or developing, or underdeveloped) areas. Nevertheless, it is evident that such difficulties remain also because of the absence of political integration: we need only look at the tendencies in trade, investments, workers migration, etc. Only a greater political integration can work as a corrective to such tendencies; studies and proposals by the EEC Commission have already been made. The political will to actuate such plans has not yet fully matured. It is clear in my view that the decisions to be taken are not simply economic decisions, however important they may be. There is a military (security) dimension, until now practically absent from the EEC interests, that will have to be confronted. Without such a dimension, in fact, a new contradiction would develop between superpowers and European presence, with new risks for the stability of the area.

We are facing a situation of open options. The demand from Southern Europe is one of greater stability, in a better integrated Western Europe. That demand comes from practically all the relevant political forces. There is a demand coming from the Middle East and North Africa: not of greater integration but of a better organised economic co-operation that could help them to better utilise their oil revenues. The Superpowers' policy is not opposed to these developments, but do not favour them either. They confront important political and economic changes with old instruments. Their flexibility becomes a source of possible weakness. The demand is still there and the option is still open: I think that the answers will follow.

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