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The NATO Southern Flank and the Mediterranean

Security in the '80s

Tentative Conclusions

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If we hypothesize a change in the American military presence in the Mediterranean with a reduction in American naval forces present in the area, we should also hypothesize possible responses such as those proposed by Cremasco in Chapter IV.

Nonetheless, regardless of the possible technical alternatives Cremasco's conclusion remains valid; such a change would be impossible without a change in the direct and the indirect European presence (for instance the proposal for a Stanavformed to replace the present Navocformed).

If we take into account the general political framework of the Mediterranean this conclusion becomes even clearer. Any change in the American military presence (or even the recognition of its limitations) would lead to a different kind and perhaps a higher level of tension in the area. The factors favouring instability which we have identified are bound to become ever more important in the future. What is more, the NATO presence in the Mediterranean has so far always been closely tied to the American presence.

Cremasco's paper contains the implicit suggestion that new efforts should be made to involve France in an integrated Mediterranean security system, modifying the present nature of the Alliance so as to allow her to take on this role. Certainly moves have to be made in this direction. Nevertheless politically such an integrated security system requires more than simply an increase in French involvement. France, like the other medium-sized European powers is capable of playing an important political-military role in her own national defense. When however she seeks to use her forces internationally in a broader multilateral security role in a vast area of the world all her weaknesses become apparent and she discovers that she can only act within an area already guaranteed by a superpower. France is no political or military alternative either for the USSR or for the USA.

What this means is that any Mediterranean security system based on France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey would suffer from the influence of powerful centrifugal forces acting within the countries belonging to the system. In the event of a Soviet or an American challenge or of a challenge from both superpowers these forces could well prove far stronger than those holding the system together.

Whatever proposals one wishes to make these must seek to maintain the credibility of the Atlantic Alliance, at least for a certain time. This implies a credible American presence as a guarantee for the solidity of the new security system. There can be no clean break with the existing system; rather it has to be slowly modified.

The field of possible modifications lies between two extremes, between what we might term the maximum and the minimum hypothesis.

a) The maximum hypothesis

What we are thinking of here is a kind of "NATO year" in the Mediterranean during which an attempt would be made to regain control over those factors which we have identified as possible causes of crisis in the area. In the maximum hypothesis NATO is considered as a political and military instrument fully integrated into allied strategy in the Mediterranean.

This hypothesis requires the formulation of a series of priorities shared by the whole Alliance. Clearly these priorities could no longer be those of the 1950s. They would have to include policy towards the Middle East, the security of energy supplies, the ability to control local crises and the creation of financial instruments sufficiently strong and sufficiently well endowed to respond to economic crises in member countries.

Having defined these priorities it might be possible to make a collective effort to resolve the Cyprus crisis along with Turkish-Greek differences over the Aegean. This should not be too difficult,

at least in the scenario under consideration here which is only credible on the basis of a high level of coherency and of political homogeneity between allied governments on the Southern flank.

Our "maximum hypothesis" thus depends on major political changes within the countries of the Southern flank, implying a broader acceptance by these countries of the military security priorities and the objectives of stability which this scenario aims to realize. Naturally this on its own is not enough. The political willingness of the Southern flank has to be matched by a parallel American willingness to accept a direct military commitment and to run risks. If these two preconditions are not met the scenario becomes completely unrealistic.

If they are met it becomes necessary to consider the need for an increase in military expenditure so as to maintain flexible overseas intervention forces and so as to finance any necessary intervention. It would be necessary to control a number of key strategic positions such as the Gulf, the Suez Canal and the round-Africa route so as to guarantee the Alliance's energy security. This could lead to the creation of alliances tied to a concrete evaluation of immediate security requirements rather than to long term political prospects. This in its turn could expose the whole allied strategic system to a policy of destabilization set in motion by external powers and thus to risks of an excessive military commitment.

It could well be the political preconditions for this scenario which would suffer first from such a policy of destabilization creating the problem of how to maintain the degree of public order and of consensus necessary for such an interventionalist policy. This is not a new problem but this does not make it any easier to resolve....

b) The minimum hypothesis

This supposes that the present trend towards the disintegration of the Alliance will continue. In this case the problem remains of how to maintain an acceptable level of security and stability, without

which the whole system would break up, coexistence would come to an end and we would find ourselves in a situation of open crisis or of war.

This (minimum) acceptable level of security would be guaranteed by a combination of different factors, even if these did not always perfectly interlock, for example:

- the maintenance of American forces (and in particular of American air and sea forces) in the Mediterranean.
- the survival of a NATO command network. In practice this would be structured on a bilateral basis, that is on the basis of ties between the USA and individual allies.
- a series of empirical, bilateral "arrangements" with French, Spanish and perhaps with Yugoslav forces. These would make it possible to hold joint manoeuvres or exercises from time to time and to reach agreements on surveillance and patrols, exchanges of information ect.

This scenario is characterized by its flexibility. Nonetheless it is possible to identify certain elements of rigidity without which the whole minimum hypothesis would collapse and yet which at the same time limit the credibility of the scenario. In particular:

- The entire scenario presupposes that there will be no major change in the American presence. If such a change should occur the scenario would tend to lose credibility, indeed in the event of an American withdrawal this loss of credibility would be inevitable. Even without going this far, any change in the nature of American forces in the area could provoke a crisis. Supposing for instance there were to be a reduced naval presence and an increased presence of the American air force and of forces based in the USA and assigned for emergency intervention in the Mediterranean. These forces would require even greater access to ground bases and would be even more dependent on allied good will than existing American forces in the area. What is more

such a solution presents the disadvantage that the deployment of these forces in a crisis would concentrate international attention (and tension) on the country providing them with bases. In a politically complicated situation in which international cooperation is at a low ebb any movement of forces on this scale would be bound to provoke hostile reactions thus reducing the speed of the allied reaction. Thus in the scenario being considered it would be practically impossible to change the present composition of American air and sea forces and in particular of the VI fleet.

- Not only do the requirements of the scenario determine the quality of American forces present in the Mediterranean; they also determine the ways in which these forces could be used.

Any scenario based on a network of bilateral relations has to take account of the variable nature of these relations. What is more, in the absence of a clear point of reference for political forces within individual countries, excepting the relationship with the United States, we will inevitably witness a phenomenon already seen in the past, namely the parallel emergence of dependency on a hostile attitude towards the USA. All this, combined with a climate of growing suspicion and nationalist antagonism, makes any American political and military commitment in the Mediterranean extremely delicate.

In this kind of scenario it is difficult to hypothesize any increased role for Europe. Rather the whole emphasis is on the central American role and this denies any increased European commitment. It is hard to imagine crisis situations in which the USA and the Europeans could succeed in agreeing their respective roles in advance and then in applying this policy to their relations with the Southern countries. It is far more likely that the Mediterranean countries' relations with the major Western European countries would tend to overlap their relations with the United States: at times the two sets of relations would prove complimentary, at times contradictory. In other words it is unlikely that on their own, without American help,

the European countries could succeed in creating a degree of political cohesion within the Mediterranean area or even on NATO's Southern flank.

In general terms then the main failing of the minimum hypothesis seems to be that it does not really provide for any reduction in the American commitment: on the contrary it could even make that commitment more rigid. At the same time it offers no prospect for improved stability and security. What is more it could contain the germs of a major Mediterranean or Euro-American crisis in the future.

#### Towards other scenarios?

Our analysis of NATO's Southern flank and of the problems of security and stability facing the Mediterranean seems to lead to the conclusion that there is a need for greater flexibility so as to respond to crises and problems which differ from those of thirty years ago, as well as for a higher degree of international political coherency (a "political center" in the region) as a prop for internal stability in the key countries in the theater and thus for the overall security of the area.

Cremasco's paper discusses a number of technical hypotheses (such as a reorganization of command structures, the setting up of a STANAVFORMED and the granting of a greater operational role to France). These however are likely to be of only limited significance if no attempt is made to modify the general political structure of the Alliance, choosing a middle road between the maximum and the minimum hypotheses outlined above.

The main characteristic of these scenarios was that they were both based on the existing NATO system which they proposed either to broaden and strengthen or to further dilute (which in practice is what is happening today). If one remains within the frame of reference of this "NATO system" one is bound to accept its limits, the most important of which seem to me to be:

- the continued need for a US commitment in excess of what is practical or desirable.
- the prevalence of military considerations and policy tools over political and economic considerations and instruments, even when the latter are better suited to the understanding of a situation and to the need to intervene in that situation.
- the lack of a clear form of political coordination apart from summit meetings between the main European allies and the USA.

It is unlikely that the "NATO system" will succeed in overcoming these defects. It might then be useful to try and change the system so as to give a higher priority to new political considerations. The main possibility for a move in this direction seems to be an increased European commitment and in particular an increased commitment by the European Community.

It is also possible for the European commitment to take the form of bilateral agreements. Nonetheless any attempt to imitate the past roles of Britain and France in the area would be unthinkable. No one European state, on its own, today, has the capability to become the political and economic (not to say the military) "center" of the Mediterranean. Even Germany, the most important trading partner of the countries of the area, operates primarily through a series of multilateral agreements and organizations centered on the EEC.

At the same time any form of increased European commitment will have to be coordinated in some way with the strategic and military reality represented by the Alliance and with the USA's new security problems (the commitment in the Middle East, energy security etc.).

The main policy tools available to the EEC are the following:

- the common policies (trading, agricultural, regional policy etc.).
- the series of association agreements, the Mediterranean agree-



ments and the agreements with Yugoslavia and Rumania.

- the Euro-Arab dialogue.
- the Lomé Convention.
- the political cooperation mechanism.
- monetary cooperation (the EMS).

On their own these policy instruments are not enough. They have to be expanded to include industrial and energy policy as well as development aid.

Above all there is a need for the Europeans to take on greater responsibilities in the field of security. At an early stage this could be achieved indirectly through the functioning of political cooperation on political-military questions and in areas affecting security. This has already occurred in the ECSC negotiations. Another possibility would be to involve Europe in the military cooperation organized through the IEPG (This would not be as strange as it might seem. Particularly in high technology sectors it is not easy to distinguish between "military" and "civilian" work). For the future however it will be necessary to develop some kind of institutional machinery to facilitate consultations and crisis management, on the one hand between the EEC and the USA, on the other with NATO. The aim would be to coordinate the long run management of intervention with strategic doctrine.

None of all this would resolve the Alliance's operational problems in the Mediterranean. It could however help to provide a response to the main political weaknesses of the "NATO scenarios" allowing the EEC to take on its role in the Mediterranean as painlessly and as effectively as possible, while at the same time making it possible for NATO to fully exercise its functions.

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