

**EUROPE, THE SUPERPOWERS AND THE MEDITERRANEAN
THE SECURITY DIMENSION**

by Stefano Silvestri

vice-president, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome (Italy)

paper prepared for the international seminar on "Challenges to Mediterranean
Cooperation and Security", Spetses Island, Greece, 28-31 may 1987

There are two ways of looking at the Southern Flank of NATO, from the perspective of the main Western European countries. One is the "safety belt" approach. The other is the "overall stability" approach. Both recognize the great importance of the Mediterranean region for European security. The first one however is based on the assumption that this region is "crisis prone", basically unmanageable without the direct intervention of the Superpowers, too risky and volatile for long-term policy commitments: the main objective of Europe therefore should be a "damage limitation" operation. The principle instrument of Mediterranean policy would be military force and the capacity to enforce an external will on the local powers.

The second one, on the contrary, is based on the idea that the basic instability of the Mediterranean region can be cured, that there is enough good will and political capacity inside the region to establish long-lasting and peaceful relationships, that a policy of stability can be based on the growing awareness of the existence of very important common interests between Mediterranean and European countries. The instruments of such policy would be more of an economic and political, rather than military, nature.

Not surprisingly, the first point of view is more common in Northern and Central Europe, while the second one is more or less shared by the Southern European countries.

The problem is that in order to try to implement their favourite strategy, the Southern countries need the cooperation of their allies, while the first strategy can be pursued, at least for a while (under some circumstances, for a very long while), disregarding the wishes of the Mediterranean countries.

N.B. This paper cannot be quoted and/or reproduced without the express consent of the author and/or the Istituto Affari Internazionali.

The author acknowledges the contributions received from Roberto Aliboni and Maurizio Cremasco, respectively on the Middle Eastern and on the military dimensions of the Mediterranean problems.

No one of course would willingly choose the use of force when other ways are readily available. Still, there is a great difference between a policy of "consensus gathering" and a policy of "decision sharing". The first is in search of clients, the second of allies.

The Mediterranean is torn in between. Some countries, like Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey, are formally integrated within the Western system, from the Atlantic Alliance to the EEC, but their participation is frequently under scrutiny and criticism, while their influence and effectiveness is limited.

The policies of the Western powers towards the Mediterranean are similarly divided and contradictory, going in either direction according to the prevailing mood and expediencies.

The net result is a situation of growing confusion and instability. The question asked in this paper is if there is a chance for an initiative coming from the South, aimed at establishing a stable and positive relationship of security and stability between the Mediterranean and Europe.

The political diversity

The Mediterranean area cannot be considered a unitarian region. In the Mediterranean different political, religious, military and economic realities meet, sometimes in cooperation, sometimes in conflict. No single Mediterranean power is capable of imposing its will on the entire area, by the use of military force or otherwise. On the contrary, each Mediterranean country is a somewhat "junior" partner, in alliance with stronger powers. Local conflicts therefore are intertwined and mixed up with other international conflicts, larger and more important. The Mediterranean countries moreover are frequently interested in utilizing their alliances in order to strenghten their stance, to avoid any important concessions and to protract the local conflicts, until their freezing and their internationalization. All this creates a balance of mutual impotence.

No attempt to impose an external order on the Mediterranean is likely to succeed. Neither of the Superpowers, in the last forty years, has given the Mediterranean enough importance and priority and has invested enough resorces to become its master. The problem of course is that the conflicts interesting the Mediterranean can only rarely be circumscribed to the riparian countries alone. On the contrary, they are generally bound to involve other countries and regions, to establish a kind of "domino escalation", practically impossible to fully control.

The division and confrontation between East and West has effectivly frozen and put out of the political picture the traditional infra-European conflicts. No such result has been achieved in the Mediterranean, where the borders between the two "blocs" are muddled and dubious, while the alliances are frail and changeable.

This situation favours the growing impact of multiple threats, affecting both the Mediterranean and the European countries. Between them, international

terrorism is now preeminent, but more traditional military, social and economic threats are also present.

Attempts have been made in the past, and still are being made to deal with this problem in a multilateral and peaceful way. None of these attempts however has fully succeeded yet. The most successful one was probably the so-called Camp David process, in bringing peace between Israel and Egypt, with the help of the United States and the military guarantee of the Multilateral Force in the Sinai. This same approach however has dramatically failed in Lebanon, and did not expand to embrace the other Arab countries bordering with Israel.

No success whatsoever was possible for the interesting idea of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, modelled on the experience of the CSCE. Even the limited Mediterranean participation in the CSCE process has been characterized by a number of failures, or at best by irrelevance. There is now the idea, championed by the Italian Government, of the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean "support group", involving at least three NATO countries (Italy, France and Spain) and three non-aligned countries (Yugoslavia, Egypt and Algeria), all interested in strengthening the chances of peace and stability in the Mediterranean. But it is easy to foresee the important limits and weaknesses of such a project, should it be implemented. Political differences between its members, their relative impotence vis-à-vis the major powers present in the Mediterranean, the absence of important countries (such as Greece and Turkey, by the way, but also Morocco or Saudi Arabia), the vagueness of the political aims, are themselves enough to increase scepticism.

What is happening, on the contrary, is the creation of new linkages between "moderate" countries of the Arab world and European countries, on matters such as anti-terrorism cooperation, while some more "radical" countries are driven away from Europe and the West. This is not the result of a conscious "bloc policy" of the European powers, as the logical consequence of the aggravation of the Mediterranean conflicts and of the limited measures taken until now to circumscribe them.

The linkages created so far however are not strong enough to establish a new pattern of alliances and guarantees between European and Mediterranean countries. The divergencies existing among Europeans, and with the United States, on the best way to fight instability and counter the threats coming from the Mediterranean, are weakening the present relationship. Even the European Community, the biggest economic power of the area and the main partner of all the Mediterranean countries, was unable to produce a coherent and effective policy towards these regions, in order to bring about at least a modicum of economic development and prosperity.

This is not to say that the Community's Mediterranean policy has been totally ineffective, but that its successes seems to be a thing of the past. The establishment of strong association ties with almost all the Mediterranean countries is of course an important accomplishment. The substantial help given to the democratic political forces in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Turkey, is still the greatest achievement of Western Europe in the last years. But the practical failure of the Euro-Arab dialogue, and the inability to envisage and implement a common security and foreign policy in the Mediterranean, are not likely to be overcome in the near future.

The military diversity

In the past, the military threat against Nato's southern flank has been largely an indirect threat. Soviet troop deployments and readiness levels have all pointed toward an attack in the central European region. No Soviet divisions have stood ready for short warning attacks against Italy, Greece or Turkey.

Under the "flexible response" strategy, Nato has declared that it will meet any attack with whatever level of force is necessary, including nuclear weapons. The intent has been to deter war by posing a grave risk of nuclear escalation. And the same risk would ensure that any war would be quickly ended through negotiations or exhaustion.

For the southern region, "flexible response" has meant a minimum role. If Nato held in the center with conventional forces, or if necessary, nuclear weapons, peace would soon come, with little action on the flanks. If Nato were defeated in the center, the flanks would have little choice but to accommodate to Soviet desires. Thus, southern flank countries have had a vital stake in the success or failure of Nato defenses, but have had little effect on the outcome.

The situation has changed in the '80s. The growing nuclear capabilities of both sides have culminated in a fundamental change in both Nato and Soviet perceptions. Both appear to recognize that the only way to achieve a reasonably satisfactory outcome would be to limit any conflict to conventional means. The arms control negotiations, under way between the Usa and the Ussr, are reinforcing this trend, proposing the progressive elimination of theatre nuclear weapons from Europe. Nato, therefore, is striving to increase its defense budgets so that nuclear weapons will not have to be used at an early stage. On the Soviet side, there is continued growth in numbers of divisions and conventional weapons of all types.

It remains true, however, that both sides have interests so vital that nuclear war at some level could appear preferable to abandoning them. For Nato, these interests are located in the central region of Europe: avoiding catastrophic defeat on flanks also would be a vital Nato interest and could trigger nuclear defenses, but the fact is that there is more room for maneuver (either political or military, or both). If the Soviets choose to launch a military attack against Nato as a means toward limited gains, therefore, they will have to do so without total victory over Nato forces and without seeking to capture West Germany. Consequently, a war for limited gains would make the southern region of Nato as attractive a target for the Soviets as the center region (and a less risky target).

The southern flank of Nato, moreover, is not merely a regional defense line. It is also the guarantee of a Western strong presence in the oil rich Middle East, and the strategic cover of the Western dominance of the entire Mediterranean region. Thus, in the event of a Warsaw Pact-Nato conflict, the Soviets might well turn to the southern flank of Nato as an opportunity for important military and political success, in Europe, in the Middle East, in North Africa and in the entire Mediterranean.

The increasing conflictuality of the Mediterranean region, the "sabre rattles" coming from many local powers and little wars, the direct and indirect threats stemming from "low level conflicts" (such as international terrorism, civil wars etc.), the Arab-Israeli and the Iraq-Iran wars, could easily become the focus of international conflicts and the occasion for Soviet military operations against the West, even avoiding a direct Nato-Warsaw Pact confrontation.

The conventionalization of war in Europe (and in the southern flank in particular) is bringing to the forefront the inadequacies and the problems of the conventional forces of the southern European states. The geostrategic and military strengths and weaknesses of the countries of the southern region are as follows:

a. Italy

Geostrategically, Italy has the advantage of bordering two neutral countries, Austria and Yugoslavia, ready to fight to safeguard their territorial integrity and unwilling to open their frontiers for the passage of Warsaw Pact divisions in case of an East-West crisis in Europe. Furthermore, Italy has the geostrategic advantage of presenting a single, limited avenue of ground invasion at its north-eastern border, characterized by mountainous, rugged terrain for most of its extension. Except for the narrow Gorizia gap, mass armor operations would not be possible. The terrain is well suited for dug-in, fortified defenses. The employment of remotely deliverable mines - antitank and antipersonnel of the types indicated in paragraph 2b - seems particularly attractive to block roads and passages. Their dissemination along valley roads would retard and impede movements of armored and mechanized units, providing for an increase of fixed, lucrative targets.

Furthermore, Italy's unique geostrategic position protruding in the Mediterranean Sea, accentuated by Sardinia, Sicily and the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa, constitutes both an element of defensive liability and of operational advantage and opportunity.

On the one hand, Italy's extensive coastline makes surveillance more difficult, while its Mediterranean projection makes it more vulnerable to any southern threat and to submarine launched cruise missiles (10). On the other hand, that same Mediterranean projection and the islands allow for greater air and sea coverage of the Mediterranean, enhancing the role of ground-based air power.

In addition, the relative width of the Sicily Channel allows for easy monitoring, control and filtering, if necessary, of maritime surface and submarine traffic in case of conflict.

New technology can help the Italian defensive posture by offering more sophisticated sensor and weapons systems (torpedos, mines, depth charges) for the antisubmarine warfare (ASW) and very precise air-to-surface and surface-to-surface antiship missiles with longer standoff ranges and better resistance to deceptive measures.

A new element of vulnerability is represented by the new Soviet SS-12 mod. and SS-23 SSMs. The 900 km range SS-12 mod. from Czechoslovakia can cover the Italian territory up to Naples and Taranto, while the 500 km range SS-23 from Hungary can hit targets in the northern battle area up to Verona. This threat would increase in quantitative and geographical terms if SS-23s would be deployed in some North African countries.

The present technology does not offer a reliable, effective anti-tactical ballistic missile (ATBM) system. However, research and development is being conducted in the United States and in Europe to field an ATBM architecture complementing the long-range and short-range air defense missile system.

b. Greece

Greece's most evident geostrategic disadvantage is the short distance between the Greek-Bulgarian border and the Aegean Sea coastline. It would be impossible to trade space for time. There is no alternative to forward defense. New technologies can help to defend at the border. As in the case of the Italian north-east border, active defense can be coupled with fortified interlocking bases, remotely fired gun and mortar positions, hardened and concealed electronic jammers, smoke and chaff generators, etc., exploiting the characteristics of the terrain to their maximum.

Another defense liability is the limited size of Greek territory. While the airbases are within range of the Soviet bombers and Su-24 type fighter bombers - some also of the Bulgarian Mig-23BM aircraft - there are not enough of them for the redeployment and dispersal of vital air assets.

New technologies can provide for effective air defense systems, in particular surface-to-air missiles with shorter reaction times, stronger resistance to countermeasures, higher lethality warheads. Even recent developments in AA guns appear as attractive solutions for point defense problems against the Warsaw Pact air threat.

On the other hand, Greece, with its more than 3,000 islands, can utilize new technologies for the control of the Aegean Sea. Long-range stand-off air-to-surface missiles can provide a significant capability for a thorough sea denial role. Passage through the Aegean Sea of Soviet Black Sea Fleet naval forces, in case of Soviet control of the Turkish Straits, can be denied by the employment of missile-armed fast patrol craft, easily dispersed among the island ports and attacking with wolf-pack technique, by aircraft armed with sea-skimming ASM, and by mobile ground-launched SSM deployed on the islands controlling the most important sea passages and choke points.

Finally, new technology sensors and mines are other assets that can turn the tide in favour of NATO forces in the anti-surface ship and anti-submarine warfare operations in the Aegean Sea.

The SSM threat will significantly increase when Bulgaria replaces its 40 FROGs and 36 SCUDs with the new SS-21 and SS-23 missiles. The 120 km SS-21s will be capable of covering the entire Thrace area, while the SS-23s the majority of the Greek territory. The SS-23s could be employed for a

conventional pre-emptive strike against the airbases and other key military targets.

c. Turkey

Turkey's geographic position, which is at the root of its strategic importance for NATO defense, is also at the root of the complexity and difficulty of Turkey's defense problems.

A geostrategic analysis reveals a number of negative elements in terms of defense. In the event of an East-West conflict, the Turkish armed forces would find themselves engaged on three separate fronts: the Turkish Thrace, the Straits and the Black Sea coast, and the Eastern Turkish-Soviet border. Moreover, it is not to be excluded - though the hypothesis seems very unlikely - that Turkey might also be engaged on the southern front if Syria decided to side with Moscow.

There are, however, few beaches on the Turkish Black Sea coast that are suitable for massive amphibious operations - and the Soviet Black Sea Fleet amphibious force counts only 25 ships and 12 craft - while advances towards the interior are made difficult by the Pontus mountain range. The terrain on the Turkish eastern border is largely inaccessible, unsuitable for armored or mechanized units operations, and with few practicable passes. The terrain bordering on Syria is also particularly rough and mountainous, especially near Iskenderum.

The weakest and most vulnerable area is the Thrace, along the border with Bulgaria, where there are easy lines of attack through the Vardar Valley, the Struma Pass and the plains that lead directly to the Aegean Sea and the Straits. The terrain is suited for the use of armored divisions, while the shallow depth prevents the adoption of defense manouvering and makes forward defense a necessity.

As far as the Turkish-Soviet border is concerned, the characteristics of the terrain should be used to its own advantage, with active and passive defense measures, as in the cases of Italy and Greece.

The Straits can easily be closed to maritime traffic, and in this case the new technologies can simply provide more sophisticated and effective means of doing that.

For the defense of the Black Sea coast new technologies can provide a vast array of new sensors to monitor, pick up, and discriminate any surface or submarine threat. This early warning and control system can be integrated by mobile surface-to-surface missiles for the actual defense. The new mines can also be used for the purpose of interdicting the easiest approaches to the Turkish beaches.

The defense of the Thrace area can be improved not only with those physical "barriers" which can be erected, according to the features of the terrain, to constrain, impede, slow down, re-direct the forward thrust of the armored units, but also equipping the ground forces with new technology antitank missiles and the airforce with the most sophisticated distributed munitions and area coverage weapons systems.

The replacement of FRGG, SCUD, and SS-12 missiles with the new SS-21, SS-23 and SS-12 mod. missiles in the Soviet forces deployed in the Odessa Military District and in the southern TVD, which will be presumably completed in the next ten-year period, will increase the conventional SSM threat.

While the threat of the SS-12 mod. missiles will not change, since the new models have the same range as the missiles they replace, the upgrade from the SCUDs to the SS-23s would permit the Soviets to target the northern part of the Turkish territory from the Crimea peninsula and from the Krasnodar area, and the eastern part from the Georgian and Armenian regions.

The Soviet Union could reach even deeper into central and southern Turkey if SS-12 mod. missiles were deployed into Bulgaria, in the same way that they were deployed in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in 1984.

A problem of Western policies in the Middle East

New threats are emerging within the region. What is new in these threats is the fact that they seem to act independently from any East-West background and at the same time appear to be consciously directed against the West. There are forces and powers in the Eastern Mediterranean which appear willing to have a direct confrontation with the Western countries. Furthermore, they are apparently looking for such a confrontation because of autonomous motives of hostility and not because they would like to take advantage of the Superpowers' competition. Quite reasonably, this is considered by the Western powers as a threat which may be more or less effective but which, in any case, is new and adds to the old, traditional Soviet and/or East-West threats.

Second, these new threats against the Western countries are also directed against their allies in the region, that is the moderate Arab States. The assassination of Sadat, although committed by a national opponent, was correctly perceived as a blow to the Western coalition in its widest expression, that is including the Third World's allies to the West. Consequently, the new threat which is emerging in the Eastern Mediterranean, as a threat to the West in its most comprehensive notion, must be considered as an enlarged threat, not different in its nature from the Soviet one, though certainly much less effective than the latter.

Third, despite the fact that in principle this enlarged threat is not linked to the USSR and the East-West dimension, it could easily combine with both of them and become more dangerous than the well known alignments of Third World countries with the Soviet Union and its allies in order to make their national goals more attainable.

In a parallel move the threat perception of the moderate Arab countries of the region has also undergone a change. This change has presumably been even more sweeping than that of the Western countries. Here again one can point out three motives for this change.

First, the Iranian revolution, besides the role it has assumed internationally, has emerged as a fearful threat to the stability of almost all

the Arab regimes. To put it very briefly, this is due to the fact that the brand of nationalism adopted by Iran's shi'ite revolution is radically different from other forms of nationalism in the region. Despite the secular or religious character of their constitutions, and regardless of the competitive or cooperative attitude they may adopt towards Western countries, modern states in the Eastern Mediterranean take part into the international system with the aim of becoming integrated in it. They try to assert themselves as nations, but they do so by adopting Western success indicators. As assertive as any other brand of nationalism, Islamic -or Shi'ite- nationalism is by contrast entirely antagonistic towards the West and towards the leadership the latter maintains on the international system. It is because of this basically antagonistic character that Islamic nationalism constitutes the core of the new kind of threat the Western countries are perceiving in the Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, because of its antagonistic character, it is considered by the West to be a more evasive threat than that coming from traditional Middle Eastern nationalism. Finally, its basic hostility to the Western culture involves in its deadly hostility, all secular as well as religious regimes of the region so long as these regimes are committed to modernization along Western paths.

This Islamic antagonism is active in its character. As is well known, an important segment of the Iranian revolutionary leadership is convinced that to export Islamic nationalism is part of the revolutionary duties and acts accordingly. As a matter of fact, Iran is less effectively equipped to export its revolution than is usually believed. However, the important point is that, even if Iran were not willing nor sufficiently equipped to export revolution, the people in the region are in any case ready to receive its revolutionary message and it is here that the threat to regimes' stability principally lies. In many Eastern Mediterranean countries, regimes have often failed to deliver true modernization, political democracy, international prestige and more acceptable conditions of life. For this reason people are getting frustrated, rebuffing Westernization and looking towards Islam as the sound basis for implementing their expectations. Islamic nationalism as an ideology is no less dangerous to the stability of the Arab allies than a real war.

Second, as a consequence of the spreading of Islamic nationalism in the region, Arab regimes' perceptions of security in relation to their alliances with Western countries have also changed. Since Islamic nationalism deadly opposes Arab regimes on the grounds of their "unfaithful" alliance with the West, a condition for their security and stability presently lies in keeping more or less aloof from Western alliances. This has not brought about a break with Western alliances, but in many cases, especially with the Arab Gulf countries, they have been downgraded. In conclusion, after being a factor of security for many Eastern Mediterranean countries Western alliances are becoming more and more a factor of insecurity.

Third, it must be pointed out that the rearrangement of security priorities has gone even beyond that. Islamic nationalism has also changed security perceptions related to Israel and the East-West dimension. Today, these threats are much less important for the Eastern Mediterranean countries than Islamic nationalism itself. By the way this has also contributed to the downgrading of Western alliances. In particular, Western and Arab patterns of security perceptions in relation to the Soviet Union seem to diverge seriously.

In the Western countries this new set of security perceptions related to the regions ranging from the Eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia and different African areas (more or less what Brzezinski had named "arc of crises"), has given rise to the debate on the Out-of-NATO area operations and to a number of multilateral and bilateral interventions, such as that of the two Interposition Forces in Lebanon, the French presence in Chad, the mission of the mine-sweepers in the Red Sea, etc. Perhaps more intensely, it has given rise to the Western debate on what has been called "international" terrorism and to a considerable body of policies and inter-State security cooperation agreements destined to counter terrorist operations and their networks. These policies have proved far from being successful. The most important operation, the one in Lebanon, failed ignominiously, not only because the Western allied forces were obliged to withdraw under the pressure of the Islamic nationalists but also because at the end of the mission nobody could explain its rationale and its goals on the grounds of a consistent Middle Eastern policy. Today, while the Palestinian issue remains unsolved despite the emergence of favourable conditions during 1985, both Arab and European allies are subjected to terrorism and in the Eastern Mediterranean countries, instability and violence continue to prevail hopelessly. One has to argue that Western policies are somewhat mistaken.

The sequence of policies pursued by the Western countries, particularly by the United States, can be described as follows. First, the combination of events in Afghanistan and Iran, within the debate on the decline of the American power which characterized Carter's presidency, was interpreted in the United States as a new threat to the East-West dimension. As a consequence the United States were driven to emphasize global security requirements in the area, to call for the ranks of the existing alliances against Soviet penetration to be closed and to urge for the enhancement of their direct military presence. Second, while the Americans were calling for a "strategic consensus" against the Soviet Union, the Eastern Mediterranean allies were moving in the opposite direction because of the priority they assigned to emerging regional threats. After the confused and contradictory interlude of the "Reagan Plan" and the intervention in Lebanon, the third stage is represented by the emphasis suddenly placed on "international" terrorism and the role of Libya. It is not very clear whether the American Administration identifies terrorism as a global or regional threat. Generally speaking, the United States conclusion seems to be that terrorism is putting its international presence in danger. In this sense terrorism is seen as a factor having an impact on the global level and hence requiring global rather than regional responses. In other words, despite the fact that in the Eastern Mediterranean one can note a shift in the American threat perception from the USSR to "international terrorism", the fact remains that the region is subjected to global threats.

There are two main errors in this set of policies. First, the Western countries cannot continue to neglect the fundamental divergence in threat perceptions between themselves and their regional allies. Too close a relationship with the West and its strategic interests has the effect of exposing moderate Arab regimes to Islamic nationalism, domestically and abroad. Insisting on giving our Arab allies what they are obliged to consider today as "deadly kisses" is a policy of destabilization.

Second, the Western countries must give a more realistic analysis of terrorism. Identifying terrorism as a global threat and qualifying it as an "international" factor is an arbitrary intellectual unification of events that are similar in their outward manifestation but prompted by very different causes. It amounts to defining terrorism as an actor, more or less like the USSR or Communism, whereas it is a state of affairs. Such a simplification prevents Western countries from becoming aware of causes and intervening on them with adequate policies. What is important today is the consciousness that the crucial source of terrorism is to be found in the spreading of Islamic nationalism from Teheran. Despite the existence of more or less old varieties of terrorism related to different political crises and entities, it is the upsurge of Islamism and its brand of nationalism which is fuelling terrorism today, domestically and internationally. The core of present terrorism, wherever it comes from, lies within the powerful ideological frame provided by Teheran. This is not to say that Teheran is directly responsible for all the acts of terrorism around the Mediterranean. However, the Islamic nationalism preached by Teheran is the factor which catalyses regional frustration and translates it into action. In this sense, Islamic nationalism is the factor which unifies events as different as the Palestinian struggle, state incentives to terrorism and Hezbollah's terrorism in Lebanon. As a consequence, the threat should be linked rather to Islamic nationalism than to terrorism.

In conclusion, there are political roots to terrorism and this is the issue that the West must address. Islamic nationalism is today the most important political factor for the continued unrest in the Eastern Mediterranean, though poor economic management and absence of democracies are certainly no less responsible for what is happening there. What is needed is a regional policy towards Iran, Islamic nationalism and the Middle East with its diverse crises, with the aim of dealing with the political roots of terrorism, unrest and frustration. Western countries are simply lacking this policy.

Some final considerations

There is no easy solution for the problems outlined above. What is clear is that The southern flank of Nato has its greatest weakness in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is particularly worrying for Italy. This country fears the possibility of becoming a "border country" between East and West. During a crisis the Mediterranean could easily be divided in two: the Western part, solidly controlled by the Atlantic Alliance, and the Eastern part, where such a control would be very uncertain and weak. Such a situation should worry first of all Greece and Turkey. These two countries risk isolation during the crisis, and cannot be certain that help from their allies will be prompt, important enough and unwavering.

To modify this situation, however, it would be necessary to substantially increase the integration and presence of the Western forces in the Eastern Mediterranean. Until today such a choice meant the increase of the American military presence in the Allied countries. Such a solution creates difficult internal political problems in all the European countries of the Southern Flank. Moreover, it is very unlikely that the United States themselves would agree to such a policy. The American Superpower has constantly diminished its permanent military presence in the Mediterranean during the last decade. The

only increases made were temporary and motivated by the national American urgency to act in non-European crises, such as the defense of Israel or the "punishment" of Libya.

No military solution can be found, without an improvement of the international political presence of the West in the Mediterranean. NATO and the Usa are not up to the task: a European initiative is therefore needed.

The European Community is directly related to many of these problems. The European Single Act, moreover, giving to the European Political Cooperation the authority for looking at security problems, has open the door to a wider mediterranean policy of the EC. And anyway, many new developments are obliging the EC has to rapidly define its policy towards the Mediterranean region: there is the Turkish demand of accession to the EC, the increasing likelihood of similar demands coming from Malta and eventually Cyprus, the need to confront the Yugoslav economic and politica crisis, the urgency of finding a coherent approach towards some key moderate arab states, such as Egypt, Morrocco and Tunisia, and towards Israel, in order to strenghten their resistance against islamic fundamentalism and turmoil, etc.

The European Community should logically expand toward Turkey and Cyprus, both European Associates of the EEC. This is a political necessity for the Mediterranean and a good thing for the overall stability of the continent. This enlargement will be practicatly impossible, however, shoud we not be able to manage the present situation of crisis, between Greece and Turkey.

That is not to say that Greece has a veto power on the problem of Turkish entry into the EEC, or that Turkey can play on the European and American desire to strenghten its posture in order to dismiss any attempt to solve the Cyprus question. That is simply to say that any future solution will certainly require a big change of the agenda of the negotiations. Cyprus should become the logical and important appendix of a larger agreement on common interests and joint actions in the Eastern Mediterranean, agreed upon between all the local actors. No solution can be found in "zero-sum" diplomatic or military games.

The EEC, and the involvement of the other Western European countries, can make the difference and change the sum for the necessary amount. No engagement from outside will be possible or forthcoming, however, without an initiative coming from the Mediterranean, particularly from the Eastern Mediterranean, and from our countries. Only these countries can underline the urgency of a common policy for the Eastern Mediterranean in the economic and security spheres, based on the European Community, the European political cooperation and, of course, a common European position inside the Atlantic Alliance. Such a policy could very well proliferate, and contribute to the strenghtening of the present "Mediterranean network" between Europeans and moderate Arabs, while maintaining a sufficient modicum of necessary relations with the remaining "less moderate" states. But the first move will have to come from the South-Eastern tier of Western Europe with the help of their European allies.

The Eastern Mediterranean has clearly established its "nuisance value", as far as the West is concerned. This situation cannot be protracted without risks. It is easy to identifie the policy initiatives that could transform the present "nuisance" (and risk) in a new "asset":

- the establishment of a better Mediterranean policy of the EEC, integrating both the Greeks and the Turks inside the European Community;
- a gradual solution to the Cyprus problem, through the integration of this country in a larger European context, where both Greeks and Turks can be regarded as a "minority", and through "objective" international guarantees to both Communities;
- the possibility of a stronger common European policy towards the Middle East, profiting from the geostrategic location of these countries and from their relationships with the area;
- the establishment of a better common system of Air Defence for the Southern Flank, the creation of a secure environment for the operations of the maritime forces of Nato, and the organization of a joint system of military back-up of the many weak spots of the South Eastern theatre.

These policies should be based both on the initiatives of the parties concerned and on the assistance and help from the outside. The United States however are no more interested in playing a very prominent role in the area. On the contrary, their present policy, sooner or later, could result in the creation of a real "vacuum" of political and military power. Initiatives of this kind could strongly influence Western perceptions of the Mediterranean, increasing the chances of the "overall stability" approach, and of filling the "vacuum". They need therefore courage and political decisions on the part of the EEC (and Nato) at least as much as on the part of Greece and Turkey themselves.

iai INSTITUTO ARCA
INTELLIGENZA E COMUNICAZIONE

n° Inv. 9368

B B I A