

THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA IN PERSPECTIVE AS SEEN  
FROM THE UNITED STATES AND FROM ITALY

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1. The Mediterranean area as seen from a NATO vantage point.

NATO's Southern Region was often dubbed in the past as the "soft underbelly" of the Atlantic Alliance. There were reasons for such a definition: the endemic instability of the political institutions of the Southern Region countries and their poor economic situations; the shaky relationship between Greece and Turkey, characterized by sudden bursts of bilateral crisis up to the brink of open hostility; the slower pace of modernization of Southern Region armed forces. Year after year, NATO concern was officially voiced. With the deployment of a Soviet Mediterranean Fleet starting in the mid-sixties and reaching its peak in the mid-seventies, NATO added a new term to its military glossary: the "threat from the South". Thus NATO was explicitly admitting that the Alliance had lost its naval supremacy, and that the Mediterranean Sea was not an "American lake" anymore. Official concerns notwithstanding, NATO consistently adopted an attitude towards its Southern Region which I would like to call "rational neglect". Neglect, because NATO was never able, nor really willing, to organize a coherent, Alliance-wide effort to strengthen its defense posture in the South, leaving the task of helping Greece and Turkey militarily and economically to the United States and West Germany. Rational, because, in the South, NATO still enjoyed important geostrategic and military advantages; because the Soviet naval presence was certainly limiting the American peacetime politico-military options in the Mediterranean, but was no match for the U.S. Six Fleet supported by other allied navies (French Navy included) in case of war; because the threat against North and Central Europe was larger in quantitative terms, more ominous because of a higher possibility for a Warsaw Pact short warning attack, and more devastating because it was pointed at the core of the European continent; and because Soviet military exercises clearly indicated the lower priority of the Southern Front within Soviet planning for a war in Europe.

Is the present Southern Region picture so different from the past as to justify a change in NATO's attitude? Are there elements in this picture that may act as a cure for NATO's so-called "Central Front syndrome"? I do not think so. Actually, I would argue that the present picture is bound to reinforce that attitude, even though NATO has not ended its official concern about the need to involve the entire Alliance in helping the LDDI (Less Developed Defense Industry) countries.

The threat from the East in the Southern Region actually appears to be even less today than it was in the past.

Hungary is on the path of internal liberalization, following the Polish model, and appears set for a peaceful transition to democracy. A national election will be probably held not later than next spring and a victory of the reformist forces is expected. A striking example of the political change in that country has been the dismantling of its part of the "iron curtain" and the attitude taken by the Hungarian government, in the face of sharp criticism from some of its allies on the exodus of East German citizens to the West across its Austrian border. In 1988, Budapest announced a 14% reduction in its defense budget for 1989 (1), a 40% decrease in the number of conscripts and the conduct of fewer military manoeuvres. Furthermore, at least one-fourth of the 65.000 Soviet troops stationed in Hungary will be withdrawn by 1991, (2) in the framework of the unilateral reduction plan outlined by Gorbachev in December 1988. This plan provides for the withdrawal of six Soviet tank divisions from East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, for a total cut of 5.000 tanks and 50.000 men (3). Finally, the deterioration of the Hungarian-Romanian political relationship to a "bottom point" -- as stated by the Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyula Horn in July 1989 -- and the emergence of official concerns for an alleged Romanian "military threat" underlines the present precarious state of cohesion of the Warsaw Pact in the Southern Region (4).

Bulgaria's communist regime has not changed its very conservative political character, while erratically trying to emulate some of the economic policies adopted by the Soviet leadership (5). However, Sofia joined the other Warsaw Pact allies in disarmament moves, and announced a 12% reduction in the defense budget, plus a cut of its armed forces amounting to 10.000 men, 200 tanks, 200 artillery pieces, 20 aircraft and 5 naval units (6).

Romania has always been, and still is, a case "per se". Secretary Ceausescu holds the country in a tight grip and no liberalization moves can be expected from the Romanian regime. Bucharest, which had cut its defense budget by 5% in 1986, has not followed the wake of unilateral reductions started by the Soviet Union. But the country is in a very deep economic crisis. Thus, it appears unlikely that Ceausescu would be in a position to devote a great amount of resources to future military budgets.

Hungarian, Bulgarian and Romanian armed forces are still largely equipped with old weapons systems -- T-54/-55 main battle tanks (MBTs), BTR-50/-60 armoured personnel carriers (APCs), FROG and SCUD surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs), AT-3 anti-tank missiles, SA-4 and SA-6 surface-to-air missiles (SAMS) and Mig-17 and Mig-21 combat aircraft) (7) -- appear to be lagging behind their modernization programs, and are considered to be at an

average level of operational readiness.

No Soviet forces are deployed in Bulgaria and Romania. The hypothesis that Bucarest would accept such a deployment, even in a scenario of an East-West crisis in Europe, has always been considered unlikely. Today, this hypothesis appears even more remote.

Furthermore, the manning of the Soviet divisions located in the three Military Districts of Odessa, North-Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus is between 50% and 75%. This means that these divisions need to be brought up to 100% manpower and provided with additional armaments and equipment before being employed. This improvement in operational readiness would constitute an element of warning which might be lacking in Central Europe where the Soviet divisions are considered to be combat ready.

Even the implementation of the INF treaty tends to favor the Southern Region. In fact, the elimination of Soviet SS-12 and SS-23 short range missiles has left the SS-21 as the only tactical missile system which could be effectively used in a conventional role due to its high accuracy (estimated CEP of 50 meters). However, because of their range (120 Km.) and their actual deployment the SS-21s pose a greater threat of preemptive attack against the northern and central European territory, in a short warning attack scenario, than against the Southern Region.

Finally, the "threat from the South", represented mainly by the Soviet aeronaval presence in the Mediterranean, has also shown a downward trend in terms of yearly ship-days and average daily strength. However, the reported expansion of the facilities that the Soviet Navy uses in the Syrian port of Tartus (8) is a clear confirmation that the Soviets still have the same special interest for the Mediterranean.

NATO Southern Region armed forces on the other hand have undergone a significant modernization, with further steps to be taken in the current procurement programs.

The Greek Army has acquired AMX-30 and Leopard-1A3 MBTs, and is upgrading its old M-48s, which still constitute the bulk of its armoured divisions. The anti-tank capability of the ground forces have been strengthened with the procurement of Improved TOW and MILAN missiles. The anti-aircraft defense has been improved with the acquisition of ARTEMIS-30 systems and Improved HAWK and STINGER missiles. The Air Force is now flying F-16 and Mirage 2000 combat aircraft. The Navy will be modernized with the acquisition of MEKO 200 frigates.

Italy intends to spend 5430 billion Lira in 1990 and 5719 billion Lira in 1991 in procurement. The Army will receive new tanks and new armoured fighting vehicles. Its battle management

capability will be upgraded with the CATRIN C3I system. Multi-Launchers Rocket System (MRLS) and FIROS-30, MILAN anti-tank missiles, STINGER surface-to-air missiles, ASPIDE-SPADA air defense system, KORMORAN and MAVERICK air-to-surface missiles are currently in service. The Air Force has acquired the long-range, all-weather TORNADO aircraft, is receiving the new AMX fighter-bomber, is converting 4 B-707 to tanker aircraft, is participating in the development of the EFA (European Fighter Aircraft), and is planning the procurement of AWACS type radar aircraft. The Navy has acquired its first aircraft carrier and has signed the contract for the development of the EH-101 naval helicopter and the procurement of HARRIER aircraft. Moreover, new ships -- ANIMOSO class destroyers and MINERVA class corvettes -- are entering into service, while the production of the LERICI class minehunters and SAURO class submarines is continuing.

Turkey has undertaken a 10 year 10 billion dollar plan to modernize its armed forces. The programs to start over the next few years include: armoured combat vehicles, MLRS, mobil radars, light transport aircraft, basic training aircraft, low-level air defense system, helicopters, minehunting ships, electronic warfare equipment. Currently underway are the coproduction of the F-16C/D aircraft, the procurement of STINGER missiles, the participation in the MEKO 200 class frigate international program and in the MAVERICK air-to-surface missile joint venture, the acquisition of more LEOPARD-1A3 tanks from West Germany, the further construction under licence of German submarines and DOGAN class fast patrol boats.

Furthermore, even European countries not belonging to the Southern Region have recently taken a new interest in the area.

In 1987, West Germany sent some frigates to the Mediterranean as its contribution to the partial fulfillment of the naval forces gap produced by the re-deployment of American and Italian ships to the Persian Gulf to conduct mine clearing operations and protect the freedom of navigation in that area.

In 1989, Belgian and West German naval units, and Dutch aircraft participated in the NATO exercise "Dragon Hammer" together with American, British, French, Italian, Spanish (the first large-scale participation of Spanish air and naval forces in a major Mediterranean exercise) and Turkish air and naval forces (9).

There has also been an expansion in the size of the bilateral French-U.S. naval exercises conducted in the Mediterranean Sea. The 1989 exercise "Phinia" involved three aircraft carriers, two amphibious assault ships and 15 other combat vessels operating under French command.

All this, however, is not sufficient to indicate that NATO is suddenly "re-discovering" and re-evaluating the importance of its

## Southern Flank.

In fact, the political developments in the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary, and the gradual resurgence of the "German question" under the impact of the massive exodus of East Germans and the unwillingness of the DDR regime to adopt the necessary economic and political reforms, are pointing towards a period of instability in central Europe. It is very unlikely that the Soviet Union, after having accepted the anti-communist evolution in Poland and the prospect of a similar process in Hungary, would be willing to accept the possibility of "losing" the German Democratic Republic as well. In regard to this problem, the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze issued a very strong warning during his speech at the United Nations in September 1989 (11).

If the present tendency of Eastern Europe to leave the framework of Yalta continues, then Central Europe could again become an area of instability and risk. NATO appears to be fully aware that a crisis in the East will have a profound effect on the security of Western Europe and jeopardize the ongoing arms control effort for the reduction of the two military alliances' conventional forces from the Atlantic to the Urals. In this perspective, the security problems of the Southern Region seem more marginal than ever.

On the other hand, while a crisis in Eastern Europe falls directly within the NATO's area of responsibility, the crisis-prone areas of the Southern Region are all outside of this area of responsibility which extends only to the limits of the territorial waters of the Mediterranean littoral countries.

In conclusion, it is difficult to see how NATO could be more worried about the military balance and the security problems of its Southern Flank now than it has been in the past. One could even argue that if the Vienna CFE negotiations result in a conventional forces reduction treaty, NATO would tend to privilege the north-central front when deciding where the armaments cuts should be made.

## 2. The Mediterranean area as seen from a U.S. vantage point.

The United States has always considered the Mediterranean area both as the Southern Flank of NATO and as the arena in which to engage and confront the Soviet Union in the complex play of international competition and regional influence.

Therefore, the Sixth Fleet has always been given two responsibilities: in case of a NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation, it is the aeronaval force earmarked for assignment under the operational command of CINCSOUTH; in peacetime, it is the military

instrument of U.S. foreign policy in the Mediterranean.

Thus, the American naval presence has a very high symbolic political value as the element of reassurance and support for the American friends in the area and as the long arm of the American military power for the potential adversary.

The United States is aware that the SOVMEDRON (Soviet Mediterranean Squadron) has changed the naval military balance in the Mediterranean. However, not to the point of jeopardizing the military, and in particular the political, missions of the Sixth Fleet.

Basically, in the scenario of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war in the Southern Region, the SOVMEDRON would not be able to perform a sea-denial mission, but rather a mission-denial mission -- that is a mission intended to make more difficult, if not impossible, the accomplishment of the typical tasks of the Sixth Fleet -- and only for a limited period of time. Without fully endorsing the definition of the Soviet Fleet as a "one-shot Navy", it is clear that this period of time will shrink in proportion to any Soviet inability to exploit the element of surprise to the maximum by mounting a pre-emptive missile attack against the Sixth Fleet, coordinating, as much as possible, aircraft, surface units and submarines.

Even the peacetime mission of the Soviet Mediterranean Fleet, that is acting as a counterbalance for the American naval presence, reassuring and supporting the countries of the Mediterranean with whom Moscow has special politico-military links, and conditioning the Sixth Fleet's political mission has its own limits. In fact, the constraints the SOVMEDRON would like to impose on the employment of the Sixth Fleet in missions of political pressure and intimidation, or in missions of "naval suasion" in accordance with Edward Luttwak's definition (12), are somewhat weakened by the lack of a widespread network of support facilities in the Mediterranean, by the lack of land-based air support and by the overall American aeronaval superiority in the area.

The Soviet Mediterranean Fleet has never constituted an element of superpower confrontation or a factor of further complication or destabilization in the North-South or South-South crises of the past -- the only exception being the 1973 Arab-Israeli war when, after the Israeli encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army and alleged preparations for the use of Soviet airborne forces in the Sinai, the Soviet naval units were deployed between the Egyptian coast and the American Sixth Fleet in a clearly confrontational move.

In the most recent case in which American forces were used as an instrument of political coercion (the attack against Libya in April 1986), the Soviet naval presence did not influence the

American course of action during either deployment or engagement. Nor did the Soviet naval units even remotely try to interfere with the American aeronaval forces deployed in the Central Mediterranean supporting and carrying out the attack on Libyan targets together with UK-based F-111 fighter-bombers.

In reality, the true interests of the United States in the Southern Region are related only partially to the East-West balance of power, the security problems of NATO's Southern Flank, and the activities of the Soviet Fleet in the Mediterranean. Washington is more concerned with the situation in those littoral regions which are outside of NATO's area of responsibility (the Middle East and North Africa), and with the geopolitical and geostrategic links connecting the Mediterranean area to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. This means that while NATO necessarily has an in-area projection, the United States is projected more towards the out-of-area by virtue of its foreign policy interests.

This projection had at least two consequences: since the end of the seventies, NATO's military posture in the South was weakened by the periodic re-deployments to the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea of one of the two Sixth Fleet's carrier battle groups supposed to be regularly stationed in the Mediterranean. European allies often reacted to the American foreign policy actions in the out-of-area with attitudes ranging from uncommitted to critical and with responses ranging from uncooperative to negative, opening serious rifts in the European-American relationship.

On the other hand, when a basic consensus was reached among the allies, the collective actions were often paramount in defusing the crisis situation and in showing the substantial coincidence of Western interests and concerns, even though each European country was ready to underline the "national" character of its decisions, i.e. the fact that its actions were outside of the framework of the Atlantic Alliance and were not to be interpreted as following the American lead.

The out-of-area policy of the United States in the Southern region is characterized and influenced by several factors: the continuation of the economic and military aid to the friendly nations of the area (Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia); the "special" relationship with Israel; the confrontational attitude towards the Libyan regime; the diplomatic effort aimed at gaining the European support for the American policy; and the political struggle to maintain the naval and air facilities essential for the conduct of that policy.

The strategic importance the United States attributes to Israel, together with the influence of the powerful pro-Israeli lobby, is the main element of the position of force Tel Aviv enjoys vis-a-vis the American Administration. The "special" relationship is mainly based on the U.S. awareness that Israel is the only

"true" ally in the Middle East, on the role the U.S. feels Israeli facilities and military support could play for the support of American forces in out-of-area contingencies (13), and on an expanding industrial and technological cooperation, in accordance with the December 1987 U.S.-Israeli agreement (14). This relationship has consistently played a significant role in undermining American willingness to apply the political pressure needed for the success of U.S. peace initiatives.

The U.S. hostility and its confrontational approach to Libya has gradually mounted with the increase of Tripoli's anti-Western and, more specifically, anti-American attitude; the expansion of Libyan destabilizing activities abroad; and its role in supporting international terrorism (15). The recurrent Washington-Tripoli crises and the American military actions have been the single most divisive issue between the United States and its European allies in the framework of American Mediterranean policy.

The Libyan-American air clash and the downing of two Libyan Su-22 aircraft in 1981, the sinking of Libyan patrol boats and the destruction of a SAM site at Sidra in March 1986, the bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi targets (including Col. Qaddafi residence) in April 1986, and, finally, the downing of two Libyan Mig-23 fighters in January 1989 were met with concern, embarrassment, diplomatic "dissociation", cautious disagreement, and outright criticism by the European governments (the only exception being Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher). In this context, the Italian negative reaction to the April 1986 air raid was the least nuanced among those of key European allies.

Only fifteen days after the air clash and the denunciation of the Libyan attempt to produce chemical weapons in the Rabta factory with the alleged help of Western firms, however, the Reagan Administration authorized five American oil companies (16) to resume operations in Libya.

The U.S. diplomatic effort to rally the support of its European allies has very seldom had the expected results. The American Administrations never fully understood or accepted the motives behind the different positions of the European countries and their unwillingness to have their foreign policy identified (by the Arab States in particular) with that of the United States.

Ironically, in the mine hunting operation in the Red Sea in 1984 and the Gulf operations in 1987, even though each European nation deployed its naval forces solely on the basis of a national decision, and not within a NATO or Euro-American framework, the final result was a show of Western cohesion and resolve. The operational coordination and logistic support (e.g. English support for Dutch minesweepers in the Gulf) among the different national forces further indicated that even independent national decisions, when applied to the military reality of the mission, could result



in real cooperation (17).

For years, the United States paid rent for the bases the American forces utilize in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Turkey through generous military and economic aid. Recently, because of the reduction imposed by Congress on the amount of the budget for foreign aid requested by the Pentagon, and the high percentages devoted to Egypt and Israel (65% of the \$ 4.79 billion appropriated by Congress for FY 1988) (18), the renewal of the base agreements has become a difficult issue and the discussions have resulted in tough bargaining.

The Southern Region countries maintain that the bases and the aid are separate subjects and tend to point to the domestic political implications of a protracted American presence.

The re-deployment of the U.S. 401st Tactical Fighter Wing from Torrejon (Spain) to Crotone (Italy) removed the major obstacle for an agreement with Madrid. The American commitment to supply 20 F-16 aircraft, HAWK missiles, 57 ASW, combat and utility helicopters, 60 tanks and other military equipment, plus the promise to increase U.S. aid to more than \$ 150 million in FY 1989, cleared the way for an accord with Portugal for the bases in the Azores. The withdrawal period for the U.S. facilities in Greece are to terminate in May, 1990. As of October 1989, U.S.-Greece base negotiations were still in suspense. The talks are to continue after the November 1989 general election in Greece.

The United States is aware that the allies could ask in the near future for the re-opening of negotiations on the bases. Considering the prospect of negative results, the United States is looking for alternatives in the Mediterranean. After the failure of the development of extensive facilities at Ras Banas because of Egyptian government opposition, the Pentagon has quietly been upgrading facilities at Moroccan air bases to improve their capability to service U.S. aircraft. Moreover, joint American-Egyptian military exercises are periodically held and U.S. use of Egyptian bases in particular contingencies is not excluded.

However, American use of the bases in the allied countries and in the Arab countries of the Southern Region is dependent upon the authorization of the host country and conditional upon the type of contingency as in the case of the bases in Somalia, Oman and Kenia. NATO countries (Turkey and Italy more explicitly than others) have declared that the bases are for use only in declared NATO crises. Similarly, the other non-NATO countries have hinted that the authorization will be given only when specific national interests are at stake.

In conclusion, the out-of-area interests of the United States in the Southern Region will continue to have precedence over NATO commitments and priority in shaping the U.S. military posture in

the area, if the pattern of better U.S.-Soviet relationship persists and if the East-West confrontation declines as the present, available evidence suggests -- unless Gorbachev fails. Thus, the North-South parameter is bound to be the privileged vantage point from which the United States will look at the strategic and political equation of the Southern Region. But the North-South crises have consistently played a divisive role within the American Administrations and in the Euro-American relations. This is an element that should not be forgotten or underestimated when trying to assess how future American and European policies might interact in NATO's Southern Flank.

### 3. The Mediterranean area as seen from an Italian vantage point.

Because its geographical location, military commitments in NATO, and political and economic relations with the riparian nations, Italy is "by necessity" a Mediterranean country. But in geosatrategic, political and economic terms, Italy is also, again "by necessity" a European country. In fact, the firmest and most irrevocable points of reference for Italian foreign policy -- NATO and the European Community -- are centered outside the Mediterranean region.

Thus, the Mediterranean "vocation", which, in many respects, implies the maintenance of good relations with all the nations in the area coexists with the Euro-Atlantic role, which consists of active participation in the European Community striving for a full European political integration, and full loyalty to the Atlantic Alliance in the context of a special relationship with the United States.

This coexistence has sometimes led to ambiguities in the policy formation and vacillations between the Mediterranean and Euro-Atlantic projections causing confusion and misinterpretation on the part of the United States and the NATO-European partners.

The Italian political spectrum (but with notable differences between right and left wing) has long recognized the need for a coherent Mediterranean policy, particularly since the external events from the mid-1960s and the endemic North-South and South-South crises changed the geostrategic and geopolitical landscape of the region.

Effort to enhance the North-South dialogue, support for the role of the United Nations in situations of crisis, attempts to play an effective and important "brokerage" role in the area mediating between competing powers, effort to involve the economic instruments of the European Community in support of the riparian countries of the region were all elements of the Italian

## Mediterranean policy.

But the potential ambition of the Italian policy was, and still is, limited: by the fragmentation of the Italian political system, which requires a consensus from all parties forming the coalition government on all aspects of policy; by the instability of the same system, which does not allow for long-term planning, even though Italian foreign policy has shown remarkable consistency through the years; by the limited capacity of the Italian armed forces to act autonomously in the area; by the unsupportive attitude of the Italian public for any role which might require the deployment of Italian units outside of the national territory, in particular in cases of military risk and possible casualties among draftees.

These weaknesses tend to undermine the credibility of the Italian role, especially when the country intends to adopt unilateral moves, participate in multinational initiatives, or act as a "broker".

Since mid-1979 Italy has adopted a foreign policy with a higher profile and has shown a clear willingness to assume larger political and military commitments, both within and outside NATO's framework. In this context, several examples can be cited:

- (1979) The Italian Government accepted the deployment of American cruise missiles in Italy. The decision was fundamental to the viability of the whole program aimed at the modernization of NATO nuclear forces in Europe.

- (1979) An Italian Army helicopter unit was sent to Lebanon as part of the UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force for Lebanon).

- (1980) Italy signed a treaty with Malta for economic, technical and military assistance in which it agreed to safeguard the island's neutrality.

- (1982) An Italian naval force, composed of three minesweepers, was deployed in the Gulf of Aqaba as part of the MFO (Multinational Force and Observers) designated to guarantee the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel.

- (1982-1984) An Italian Army contingent participated in the MNF (Multi-National Force) in Lebanon.

- (1984) Minehunting ships were sent to the Red Sea to participate in an international minehunting operation to clear the passage through the Suez canal.

- (1987) A naval force composed of three minehunting ships and three frigates was sent to the Persian Gulf to help keep the Strait of Hormuz open to international shipping and to protect Italian tankers.

- (1988) The Italian Government approved a NATO plan to redeploy the 72 F-16 fighters of the USAF's 401st Wing from Spain to Italy.

These decisions contributed to the new dimension of the Italian foreign policy in the Mediterranean and, at the same time,

showed its more assertive character. On the one hand, this new dimension has been somewhat marred by the political difficulties involved in the policy making process. In fact, in all cases of Italian participation in multinational operations decisions have been made only after long and heated parliamentary debates. On the other hand, this new assertiveness has also affected the traditional Italian-American relationship somewhat, changing the Italian patterns of consistent and acritical adhesion to the United States policy lines. The 1980 refusal to join the United States in creating a multinational naval force in the Arabian Sea, the deterioration of Italian-American relations during the seizing of the "Achille Lauro" liner and the Sigonella affair, the dispute about the use of the Italian bases in non-NATO contingencies, and the Italian negative reactions to the U.S. policy towards Libya are all good cases in point.

NATO, and the special relationship with the United States, is still the cornerstone of Italian foreign policy. However, particularly in the Mediterranean area, European and national factors have assumed greater importance in the decision making process governing Italian policy towards North Africa and the Middle East. In September 1989, in presenting the foreign policy of the recently formed government and stressing its continuity, Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis underlined four main courses of action: the continued effort towards the 1992 European economic integration, to be seen, however, as a step towards the European political union; the special attention to be devoted to the central-southern region of Europe, with the attempt of creating a quadrilateral relation linking Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia -- the stability of the last three countries being of paramount importance to Italian security; the full support of the Mubarak plan "one of the last solutions for the Palestinian problem"; a renewed effort, in conjunction with the EC partners, towards an expanded integration with the riparian countries of the Mediterranean (19).

Turning now to the military policy and the role of the armed forces, a series of consideration can be made.

In the last ten years, there has been a gradual but evident transformation in Italian military policy. This transformation has not altered the basis of this policy that dates from 1949, but has extended its boundaries and created new prospects. Italy has been forced to shift from a mere "defense policy" within the framework of NATO planning to a more comprehensive "security policy" in which threats different from the traditional ones, and national-only contingencies, are considered.

From the mid-sixties to 1973, Italy still evaluated the "threat from the South" basically in terms of increased Soviet capabilities in the Mediterranean and in terms of possible support by some riparian country, offering the Soviet forces their naval

and air facilities in case of an East-West confrontation. Since the threat was fundamentally Soviet or pro-Soviet, in the context of a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict, it could be dealt with through NATO.

The Yom Kippur war, with the barely avoided confrontation between U.S. and Soviet forces in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Arab use of oil as an instrument of political blackmail, and the events of the late-seventies (the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iraq-Iran war) were clear indications of the possibility of an East-West conflict stemming from an out-of-area crisis and the increased strategic link between the Gulf and the Mediterranean regions.

For Italy, it was no longer possible to delay a review of the changes in the security parameters of the Mediterranean strategic equation and a re-evaluation of the Italian political and military role.

In 1980, Socialist Defense Minister Lelio Lagorio declared that it was no longer the era of the "frontal threat" in Europe, and it argued that the new threat emerging from the South had to be met with imaginative political initiatives and not with "a roar of weapons". In this context, Lagorio advocated a role of greater national commitment to a Mediterranean policy of cooperation and assistance, and a strengthening of Italian military capabilities to give credibility to that role (20).

In 1982, Lagorio, underlining the fact that Italian military policy could not mirror that of NATO in all its aspects, went on to state that, unlike the situation in the mid-seventies, NATO no longer offered Italy a total defense guarantee (21).

The statement did not imply a shift in the traditional Italian role and missions in NATO, but merely the recognition that the situation in the Southern Region could call for the defense of specific national interests, and the expressed awareness that there could be contingencies in which Alliance support would be lacking, or late in coming.

In the military policy of the Republican Giovanni Spadolini, who replaced Lagorio as Defense Minister in 1983, there were no radical changes with respect to the policy line adopted by its predecessor, but only adjustments in tone, emphasis, and priorities. Emphasis was no longer put on the defensive nature and the geographical limits of the Atlantic Alliance. The role of Italian military policy was considered feasible and credible only "in close connection with the Western strategic plan". The possibility of "national", bilateral crisis in the Mediterranean was not ignored, but considered within a framework which excluded non-NATO defense requirements (22).

The Mediterranean "dimension" and the out-of-area projection

of Italian military policy, however, were not reversed. In fact, the higher profile of Italian foreign policy was mainly achieved through the employment of military forces.

The failure of the Lebanese peacekeeping mission, the mines threatening the merchant shipping through the Gulf of Suez, the increase of international terrorism directed against Italy -- the hijacking of the "Achille Lauro" liner (October 1985) and the massacre at Rome Fiumicino airport (December 1985) -- the 1986 U.S. crisis, and the Libyan missile attack against Lampedusa island, pushed Italy to the forefront of the Mediterranean crisis line.

Thus, the "Gorizia gap" further paled as the element by which Italian security and defense policies were to be determined, and the Mediterranean became the area which the military view as the most probable theatre of a North-South or South-South crisis possibly also involving the Italian armed forces.

Today's threat perceptions and military scenarios also include: the possibility of a bilateral military confrontation between Italy and a Mediterranean country over a controversy affecting important national interests; the possibility of Italian involvement in a Mediterranean crisis precipitated by other actors; and the possibility of hit-and run military actions conducted by small scale terrorist units, blackmail by terrorist groups, and indirect threats to the country's political or economic system.

Modernization of the Italian Navy and Air Force to enhance their capability of operating in the Mediterranean, and reinforcement of the military posture in the South, were initiated in the late seventies, together with the creation of a 10.000 man rapid intervention force (FIR -- Forza di Intervento Rapido), composed of land, sea and air components (23). Army units were redeployed to Sicily, the manning of the Army brigades stationed in the South was increased, and the existing facilities and the local technical and logistic support were improved. The Air Force upgraded the air defense system in the South with new ARGOS 10 radars, reconstituted the 37th Wing at Trapani Birgi airbase with F-104S aircraft in a fighter bomber/interceptor role, and improved its ability to conduct TASMO (Tactical Air Support of Maritime Operations) missions by procuring the AMX aircraft. Moreover, the conversion of four B-707-368C airliners into tanker aircraft will further expand the operational radius of action and endurance of TORNADO and AMX aircraft, thus improving their Mediterranean role. Finally, the planned acquisition of HARRIER VTOL aircraft to embark on the "GARIBALDI" through-deck cruiser (which in the near future will be joined by another sister ship), and procurement of ANIMOSO class destroyers, MINERVA class corvettes, and LERICI class minehunters will enhance the Italian Navy's capacity in in-area and out-of-area operations.

Obviously, the modernization of the Italian armed forces

is also improving their capability to perform NATO's military tasks and missions. However, it appears that there is greater Italian concern for extra-NATO contingencies given the more evident increase of the ability to fight a naval and air war in the whole Mediterranean area; the power projection capability provided by the GARIBALDI with the HARRIERs on board; the tendency to acquire autonomous means of intelligence and warning (the airforce intention to procure AWACS aircraft and acquire the capability to launch small intelligence-gathering satellites are good cases in point); the improved capability for rapid deployment of elite Army units.

This concern is currently fueled by several other trends and developments.

The first, is the possible proliferation of long range surface-to-surface missiles among the Mediterranean countries. The Chinese sale of CSS-2 intermediate-range (2200 miles or 3560 kilometers) missiles to Saudi Arabia has been seen as a case which could be repeated in the Mediterranean area, along with the extension of the range of the SCUD missiles (possessed by Egypt, Libya and Syria) already realized by Iraq during the Gulf war (24).

The second, closely tied to the first, is the fact that, as disclosed by the CIA director William Webster in April 1989, by the year 2000 at least fifteen nations will be producing, and possibly exporting, their own ballistic missiles (25). Even though somewhat crude and inaccurate, these systems could be employed with chemical, biological and nuclear warheads constituting a serious threat. Israel is currently developing the 500-700 Km. range JERICO II missile and Argentina is reportedly helping Egypt and Iraq on the development of the SS-1C CONDOR II missile with a maximum range of approximately 1000 Km. Brazil is developing two mobile missiles, reportedly based on the SONDA experimental rocket series, with a range of 350-1200 Km.. This trend is a clear indication of the failure of the MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime) (26) attempt to curb the proliferation of surface-to-surface missiles in the Third World.

The third, is the proliferation of the capacity of Third World countries to produce chemical weapons. Apart from the countries in the Gulf, newcomers in the the Mediterranean area are reportedly Egypt (27) and Libya, whose Rabta plant has provoked another crisis between Washington and Tripoli.

The fourth, is the long range ground attack capability acquired by Libya with the Su-24 FENCER fighter-bombers delivered by the Soviet Union in April 1989 (28). The FENCER sophistication represents a remarkable qualitative jump in the operational capability of the Libyan Air Force because of its high speed penetration, low level navigation, all-weather delivery, and weapons load options. Furthermore, its combat radius of action is long

enough to reach Italian territory with a low-low-low flight profile.

Lastly, Italian military are worried about the implication of the reductions which will have to be adopted if a CFE treaty is signed -- in particular the reduction of the air forces. Actually, these reductions will be applied to the Italian territory, but not to the territories of those countries in the Mediterranean area which could potentially become adversaries in one of the confrontational scenarios previously mentioned.



#### NOTES.

1. The reduction of 14% respect to the 1988 military budget came after the 24.7% increase of the previous year.

2. Jackson DIEHL, "Hungary, Poland Likely to Reduce Defense Spending", The Washington Post (WP), 9 December 1988, p. A16. According to Col. Gen. Matvei Burlakov, Commander of the Southern Region Group of Forces, the Soviet troops remaining in Hungary will be re-deployed away from the Austrian border to bases on the eastern part of the country. Jane's Defense Weekly (JDW), 6 May 1989, p. 795.

3. Michael R. GORDON, "Western Official Term Soviet Cuts Significant", The New York Times (NYT), 8 December 1988, pp. A1 and A18. For the detail on the arms cut see JDW, 18 February 1989, p. 279.

4. On the deterioration of Hungarian-Romanian relations, see Henry KAMM, "Rumania and Hungary Let War of Words Slip Out", NYT, 21 February 1988, p. 10. Barry JAMES, "Hungary Assails Romania over Barrier", International Herald Tribune (IHT), 22 June 1989, p. 6. Henry KAMM, "Hungary-Romania Ties Seen at Bottom Point", IHT, 11 July 1989, p. 6.

5. Henry KAMM, "Bulgarian Rejects Political Opening", NYT, 30 January 1988, p. 4. Jacson DIEHL, "Soviet-Style Changes Confuse Bulgarians", WP, 30 January 1988, p. A12.

6. Jackson DIEHL, "Two More Soviet Allies Announce Arms Cuts", WP, 28 January 1989, p. A17. An overview released by the Soviet Ministry of Defense of the proposed reductions in Warsaw Pact armed forces has been published in JDW, 17 June 1989, p. 1270.

7. The Military Balance 1988-1989, The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London 1988.

8. Robert PEAR, "U.S. Says Soviets are Expanding Base for Warships on Syrian Coast", NYT, 28 August 1988, p. 1.

9. On the exercise DRAGON HAMMER '89 see, Interarma News, 9, 1989, p. 308.

10. JDW, 4 February 1989, p. 170.

11. Robert FITCHETT, "Shevardnadze Used UN Speech to Warn the West and Bonn", IHT, 28 September 1989, p. 2.

12. Edward N. LUTTWAK and Robert N. WEINLAND, "Sea Power in the Mediterranean: Political Utility and Military Constraints, The

Washington Papers, n. 61, CSIS, Washington D.C., 1979, pp. 8-12.

13. According to the Defense Department's 1987 Report to Congress, consultations with Israel included "combined planning, joint exercises and requirements for prepositioning of U.S. equipment.

14. The agreement signed on December 15, 1987 allows Israel freedom to compete for U.S. military contracts on equal terms with companies in the U.S. and NATO members. The agreement also included a clause providing for increased Israeli-American cooperation in research and development of new military technology.

15. On Libyan activities abroad see Maurizio CREMASCO, "Two Uncertain Futures: Tunisia and Libya", Adelphi Papers, n. 231, IISS, London, 1988, p. 49.

16. The five oil companies were Conoco, Marathon, Amerada Hess, Occidental and W.R. Grace.

17. On the subject see, Maurizio CREMASCO, "Do-it-Yourself: the National Approach to the Out-Of-Area question", in "The Atlantic Alliance and the Middle East", edited by Joseph I. Coffey and Gianni Bonvicini, MacMillan Press, 1989, pp. 147-192.

18. On security assistance fundings see, "United States Military Posture FY 1989", prepared by the Joint Staff, USGPO, 1988, pp. 36-38.

19. On Minister De Michelis' declarations, see Resoconti Parlamentari, Senato, Giunte e Commissioni, n. 366, 20 September 1989, pp. 28-38. Also Leopoldo FABIANI, "De Michelis Illustra la sua Politica Estera", La Repubblica (LR), 21 September 1989, p. 16.

20. Lelio LAGORIO, "Indirizzi di Politica Militare", Servizio Pubblica Informazione della Difesa (SPID), Rome, June-July 1980.

21. Lelio LAGORIO, "Relazione alla Commissione Difesa della Camera dei Deputati", SPID, Rome, 13 October 1982.

22. Giovanni SPADOLINI, "Indirizzi di Politica Militare", SPID, 8 November 1983.

23. The land component of the FIR is composed of six battalions: two motorized, one machanized, one airborne, two engineering, with logistic support and communication, and two helicopter squadrons of the First Army Aviation Antares regiment with CH-47C and AB-212 helicopters. The sea component is made up of one amphibious group. The air component is composed of an air transport squadron with G-222 and C-130 aircraft. If and when needed, the FIR will be supported by the combat aircraft of the Italian Air Force and by the warships of the Italian Navy. On the

Italian FIR see, Maurizio CREMASCO, "An Italian Rapid Intervention Force: the Geopolitical Context", The International Spectator, n. 2, April-June 1985, pp. 51-60.

24. On the sale of Chinese missiles see, John M. GOSHKO and Don OBERDOFER, "Saudis Buy Medium-Range Missiles from China", IHT, 19-20 March 1988, p. 1. Joseph FITCHETT, "Chinese Sale of Missiles to Saudis Called Risky", IHT, 22 March 1988, p. 1. Aviation Week and Space Technology (AWST), 28 March 1988, p. 30.

25. Stephen ENGELBERG, "CIA's Chief Campaigns Against Missile-Making by Third World", NYT, 31 March 1989, p. A6. James BRUCE, "The Middle East Missile Race", JDW, 1 April 1989, p. 553. Barbara STARR, "Controlling the Spread of Ballistic Missiles", JDW, 22 April 1989, p. 696. See also, AWST, 26 September 1988 p. 21, and 3 July 1989, p. 31.

26. The MTCR attempts to control the exports of missile technology. The regime has been signed by: Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany.

27. Michael R. GORDON with Stephen ENGELBERG, "Egypt Accused of Big Advance in Gas for War", NYT, 10 March 1989, p. A1.

28. David B. OTTAWAY, "U.S. Calls Soviet Plan to Sell Libya Jets Dangerous", WP, 6 April 1989, p. A26. Michael MECHAM, "Soviet Sale of Su-24 Deepens Concern About Mideast Weapons Proliferation", AWST, 10 April 1989, pp. 19-20. See also JDW, 15 April 1989, p. 628.

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