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**THE ARMS CONTROL PROCESS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF EUROPE.  
PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES.**

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The very likely conclusion of a CFE treaty this year will constitute the starting point of drastic reductions in men and armaments of the NATO and Warsaw Pact armed forces. This, in turn, will strengthen the new era in the relationship between the two alliances opened by the collapse of the communist regime in Eastern Europe and, more recently, fostered by the proposals and measures taken by the Atlantic Alliance in its July 1990 London Summit. This relationship will be characterized by a less confrontational military posture, higher transparency in their respective military activities, and more defense oriented and, consequently, less threatening military doctrines.

However, the CFE treaty will touch upon the level of a specific group of weapons systems (tanks, armored vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft and combat helicopters), and set a limit to the total men under arms, only for the East and West members of the two alliances, and only in the European territory.

The countries geographically located outside the area of operational responsibilities established by the Warsaw Pact Treaty and the North Atlantic Treaty, and outside the ATTU (Atlantic to the Urals) area as outlined in the CFE mandate, will not be constrained and will be free to continue their military buildup, if they wish.

This is bound to raise the concern of the Southern European countries, because of the continuous, significant military buildup taking place in North Africa, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf -- regions which are all geostrategically linked, directly or indirectly, with the Mediterranean area and Southern Europe.

The CFE mandate has explicitly recognized the peculiarity of the situation in the South by excluding a zone in Southern Turkey from the ATTU area, where the arms reductions will take place and will be monitored and verified.

In fact, the text of the CFE mandate document specifically states that: "In the case of Turkey, the area of application includes the territory of Turkey north and west of the following line: the point of intersection of the border with the 39th parallel, Muradiye,

Patnos, Karayazi, Tekman, Kemaliye, Feke, Ceyhan, Dogankent, Gozne, and thence to the sea."

Presumably, this was done to appease Turkey's security concern with respect to a potential Syrian threat, however unlikely under the present circumstances. This threat could materialize if Damascus should revive its old claims on the Turkish province of Hatay (Alessandretta).

Syrian armed forces are well equipped with modern armaments: T-72 tanks, BMP-1 AIFV (Armored Infantry Fighting Vehicles), SS-21 surface-to-surface missiles, SA-6 and SA-13 surface-to-air missiles, MIG-23, MIG-25 and MIG-29 combat aircraft, Mi-24 and Mi-25 attack helicopters (1).

But Syria is not the only country in the region which has built up a significant military capability. Israel, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Algeria possess modern weapons systems and, in particular, have modernized their air and naval forces.

Military expenditures are a good indicator of past achievements and future trends. According to the American Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), Middle East military spending declined sharply by 15% in 1987 and by 12% annually in 1984-87, after reaching a high level in the 1982-84 period (2).

Still, the Middle East region imported some \$17.9 billion in arms, almost 38% of the entire world market. For the period 1977-1987, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia were the region's largest importers of arms. These three countries accounted for 33.2%, 20.4% and 11.6% respectively, of the region's arms imports in 1983-1987 (3).

A new study published in August 1989 by the Washington-based Congressional Research Service has reported that during the 1985-1988 period the Middle East received two-thirds of all armaments delivered to the Third World (4). Middle Eastern and North African countries have continued to expand and modernize their military inventories. This has been done despite a reduction in oil revenues and through a series of complex barter, offsets and net back agreements, whose precise amounts are not reflected in the official defense budgets.

There are several reasons for continued arms build-up: the regional instability created by many unresolved political issues, by the persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and by the adventurous foreign and military policy of some nations; the domestic insecurity of authoritarian regimes which tend to compensate it with a belligerent external policy; the fears of conservative regimes of the spread of Iranian-style and Iranian-supported Islamic fundamentalism.

Whithin the framework of this arms build-up, there are at least three elements of special concern for Southern European countries: (i) the proliferation of the surface-to-surface missile technology, (ii) the proliferation of the capacity to produce chemical weapons and (iii) the proliferation of high technology weapons systems in the Mediterranean area.

**(i) The proliferation of the surface-to-surface missile technology.**

The proliferation of the surface-to surface missiles (SSM) could be either the result of direct acquisition from another country willing to export -- as in the case of the Chinese sale of CSS-2 intermediate range (3500 km.) missiles to Saudi Arabia (5) -- or the result of conversion of missiles already in the inventory into systems with longer ranges and better capabilities, or the result of indigenous or joint R&D efforts for the development of new systems.

The following are elements of the present ballistic missile proliferation trend, a trend which could lead to a more volatile and dangerous world security environment:

- the upgrading of missile systems on hand;
- the utilization of developing commercial and scientific space programs as a source of ballistic missile technology;
- the cooperative efforts by Third World arms producers to develop, modify and produce SSMs by sharing costs and pooling technical expertise;
- the use of foreign consultation and technological assistance;
- the hiring of foreign scientists and engineers at high salaries;
- the setting up of complex import schemes to avoid the restrictions imposed on the export of special technology items.

Reportedly, by the year 2000 at least fifteen nations will be capable of producing -- and possibly willing to export -- their own ballistic missiles (6). In spite of their crude technology and poor accuracy, these systems could be used with conventional warheads as countercity weapons -- as Iraq did in the recent Gulf war against the Iranian cities --or employed with chemical warhead against military and civilian targets. In this case, the threat would be even more significant.

Finally, if the proliferation of ballistic missiles is followed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons -- a possibility which has acquired new relevance in the recent past -- then even the search for a new security order in Europe with the resolution of the still pending Central European security issues would appear negligible by comparison.

An outline of the current research, development and production of surface-to-surface missiles in the regions geostrategically linked with the European Southern region is presented below (7).

- Saudi Arabia has deployed the Chinese CSS-2 missiles.

- Iraq has upgraded its SCUD-B missiles in a two-phase program between 1987-1988. The first modernized SCUDs (named al-Hussain) were upgraded to a range of 600-650 km and fired against Teheran. The Iraqis claim that the second upgraded version of the SCUDs (named al-Abbas) has a range of about 900 km. These missiles also were reportedly used against the Iranian cities. Finally, on December 1989, Iraq launched a three-stage, 48 ton rocket named Tammuz I, reportedly capable of carrying satellites into space, and there are reports that another missile (called al Abid with a range of 2000 km.) is being developed.

- Egypt has produced and deployed, presumably with Iraqi and possibly North Korean help, the 90 km range SAKR-80 missile, a derivative of the Soviet FROG missile. Moreover, Argentina has, at least in the past, reportedly helped Egypt on the R&D of the VECTOR missile, a derivative of the CONDOR missile family. Iraq has also worked with Egypt on the development of the same CONDOR-VECTOR-BADR-2000 missile with a claimed capability of accurate delivery to 400 km and maximum range of 1200 km. However, the CONDOR project has been reportedly abandoned.

- Iran has developed and deployed, reportedly with Chinese and North Korean support, the OGHAB and IRAN-130 missiles with a range of about 45 and 130 km respectively.

- Israel has deployed the JERICHO 1 missile and continued the tests of the JERICHO 2 up to a range of 800-850 km. On September 1988, Israel launched, using the SHAVIT rocket, the OFFEK-1 satellite with a 75 kg test payload. It has been suggested that the SHAVIT might provide the basis for the development of the JERICHO 3 ballistic missile, potentially capable of intercontinental ranges. There are conflicting analyses on the long range missile test reported by the Soviet news agency TASS being conducted in the Mediterranean in September 1989. The test has been interpreted to be either the launch of the JERICHO 2B version capable of a maximum range of 1300-1500 km, or the failure of the second stage of an SHAVIT-OFFEQ-2 launch vehicle. More recently, on 3 March 1990, Israel launched the OFFEQ-2 spacecraft (160 kg.) using as a booster a modified version of the JERICHO missile.

Furthermore, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and South Yemen possess the Soviet SCUD-B missiles, while Lybia, Syria, North Yemen and South Yemen possess also the more accurate Soviet SS-21 missiles.

### **(ii) The proliferation of the capacity to produce chemical weapons.**

The proliferation of the capability to produce chemical weapons, and the willingness to use them in regional conflicts, has been demonstrated in the course of the Iran-Iraq war.

But new disturbing patterns are emerging in the Mediterranean area. Egypt is reportedly continuing its development efforts (8), which however have been denied by the Egyptian government, while Libya, whose Rabta plant is again at the center of international attention and concern, appears to be the most recent newcomer in the CW proliferation race. In fact, after the 1989 crisis between Washington and Tripoli on the real scope of the plant, very recent news has confirmed that chemical agents are produced in Rabta (9).

### **(iii) The proliferation of high technology weapons systems.**

The proliferation of high technology weapons systems in the Mediterranean area is best exemplified by the acquisition by Libya of Soviet SU-24 fighter- bombers in April 1989 (10). The Su-24 sophistication represents a significant qualitative jump in the operational capabilities of the Libyan Air Force. Because of its long range, high speed

penetration, very low level navigation capacity, all-weather characteristics, and weapons load options the SU-24 is a formidable weapons system. Furthermore, Libya has successfully tested a system to refuel combat aircraft in flight, thus extending their operational radius of action and their weapons load capacity. With aerial refueling, Libyan Su-24 fighter-bombers could fly farther with very low-level flight profiles, thus making radar detection more difficult (11).

Obviously, Italy is worried about these trends.

Italy's present threat perceptions and military scenarios (possible and credible as to various degrees) include:

- a bilateral military confrontation between Italy and a Mediterranean country over a controversy affecting important national interests;
- an Italian involvement in a Mediterranean crisis precipitated by other actors;
- an Italian participation in crisis-cooling or peace-keeping operations characterized by elements of potential military confrontation;
- hit-and-run military actions conducted by small scale terrorist units;
- blackmail by terrorist groups to convince the Italian government to refrain from assuming a specific foreign policy line, or to press for the adoption of a particular policy in the context of a regional crisis;
- indirect threats to the Italian political and/or economic system.

It should not be forgotten that Italy has been the only European country to be attacked by Libyan missiles and that the Libyan Su-24 aircraft have a combat radius of action long enough -- even more with air-refueling -- to reach Italian territory with a low-low-low flight profile.

In spite of:

- the progressive fading of East-West antagonism;
- the eventual restructuring of the military and political aspects of the two alliances in Europe;
- the further development of the arms control process through a CFE 2 negotiation to be started soon after the conclusion of a CFE treaty;
- the establishment of a new European "order" to be achieved through a new Helsinki Conference, political instability and potential military confrontation stemming from the Mediterranean region and the Persian Gulf cannot be ignored.

Thus, more radical disarmament measures than those agreed upon at the CFE negotiations in Vienna, will tend to be resisted by the Southern European countries on the premise that it would be unwise to disarm while all the non-European countries of the region are maintaining or upgrading and modernizing their armed forces.

Furthermore, the regional instability and the regional arms race -- which are also fueled by the spread of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons -- could again lead to armed conflicts and open the possibility of intervention by external powers. This could, in turn,

pose serious problems for those countries like Italy, which are by geographical position, political relations and economic ties an integral part of the Mediterranean region.

Certainly, it is difficult for the two superpowers and the European countries to exert effective influence the outcome of those regional political and military issues which constitute the primary cause of the endemic instability in the Mediterranean region and the Persian Gulf.

But something could be done in the realm of arms and technology transfers.

In 1987, Canada, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, followed in 1989 by Spain, agreed to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which restricts exports of certain missile technologies and components. Even though the regime has not proved able to stem the proliferation of SSMs entirely, it has been a useful step in the right direction.

It would be desirable to have more nations, and in particular the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, join the MTCR.

Moreover, the United States and the Soviet Union should reopen the Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) talks, of which four rounds were held between May 1977 and December 1988, aimed at limiting and controlling the export of conventional armaments. During the talks, the American and the Soviet delegations tabled drafts of political/legal criteria and military/technical criteria (i.e. weapon-related guidelines for arms transfer decisions. However, the two delegations were unable to agree on the actual application of these criteria in specific regional contexts.

It is recognized that the reopening of the CAT negotiations and an eventual agreement between Moscow and Washington would not be sufficient to reduce the arms transfer directed mainly to the Third World market. However, the United States and the Soviet Union are the principal arms exporters, accounting for 26.3% and 46.5% respectively of the world arms export shares in 1987 (12). Furthermore, for the period 1985-1988 the Soviet Union accounted for 34% of the Middle East market, while the United States accounted for 16% (13).

Thus, a U.S.-Soviet agreement to limit conventional arms exports could be an important symbol of a new superpower attitude, an incentive for other countries -- the European countries in particular -- to join the CAT regime and a signal to the world arms market that the times of easy access to high technology weapons systems are over.

Finally, the two superpowers should join their efforts and should participate actively in initiatives undertaken by the international and regional organizations, or conducted through diplomatic multilateral approaches, or initiated by the Western European countries through the EC mechanisms to find equitable solutions to the problems which are at the root of the endemic instability of the region. These include:

- the issue of Cyprus and the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey;

- the issues which are still deeply dividing Iran and Iraq;
- the Palestinian issue and the issue of a peace treaty between Syria and Israel;
- the Lebanese problem;
- the problem of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab countries, best exemplified by the victory of the Islamic fundamentalist groups in the June 1990 provincial election in Algeria;
- the problem of international terrorism for which the Mediterranean region provides just the right terrain for its support and proliferation, due to motivations provided by the frozen Palestinian issue, to a broad recruitment base and the willingness of some countries in the region to provide financial and logistic support;
- the issue of the former Spanish Sahara and the problem of Ceuta and Melilla between Morocco and Spain.

Obviously, not all the efforts could be jointly conducted. Specific national interests should be safeguarded; regional sensibilities and politico/military alignments should be taken into due consideration; mutual distrust and suspicions should be overcome.

But the joint efforts would be made easier if the Soviet Union continues its transformation toward a truly democratic system and if the past U.S.-Soviet confrontational approach to international problems fades away because of an improved relationship between Moscow and Washington and the successful conclusion of the various bilateral and multilateral disarmament negotiations.

## NOTES.

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4. Jane's Defense Weekly (JDW), 26 August 1989, p. 338.
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8. Michael R. Gordon with Stephen Engelberg, "Egypt Accused of Big Advance in Gas for War", NYT, 10 March 1989, p. A1.
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11. David B. Ottaway, "U.S. Calls Soviet Plan to Sell Libya Jets Dangerous", The Washington Post, 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.
12. ACDA, cit., p. 10.
13. JDW, 26 August 1989, p. 338.