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## **SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AN ITALIAN POINT OF VIEW**

*by Roberto Aliboni*

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## 1. Security risks in the regions to the south of Europe

The demise of communism brought to an end the threats to the West and to Europe along the Alliance's southern flank. However, numerous national and ethnic problems, strong and deep-seated international tensions and the low legitimacy of the regimes in power persist in these regions.(1) Remarkably instable with respect to other areas of the Third World, these regions pose considerable risks to Western Europe and the Community, risks that are, on the one hand, socio-political and cultural and, on the other, military.

Military risks. The trend towards rearmament (both conventional and non-conventional) and military spending (for both quantity and quality) is particularly strong in the areas to the south of the Mediterranean.(2)

From 1985 to 1990, military spending in the countries to the south of the Mediterranean increased from \$66.7 billion to \$70.6 billion, while it fell in European NATO countries in the same period from \$92.2 billion to \$81.1 billion.(3) In fact, in 1990, the southern Mediterranean regions accounted for 43.3 percent of total imports of major weapons systems.(4) The trend seems to be continuing following the end of the war against Iraq in 1991: the US alone has transferred weapons for a total value of \$10.8 billion.(5)

In the non-conventional sphere,(6) if Iraq's capability is assumed to have been destroyed during the course of the Gulf war, then the countries in the region now possessing a chemical capability are Egypt, Lebanon, Israel and Syria, although Algeria has the industrial infrastructure and the basic technology needed to acquire that capability. Only Israel has the capability to develop ballistic missiles, while the programmes of other countries--Iran, Iraq and Libya--have been suspended or have failed. However, numerous countries continue to acquire long-range, high performance missiles (such as the Scud C). Again, Israel seems to be the only country with nuclear capability. Nevertheless, the war against Iraq revealed the importance of attempts to develop such a capability (and the ineffectiveness of international controls). Iran, Syria, Egypt, Turkey and Algeria could try to acquire a nuclear capability; the Iraqi regime could try again. This situation is made more dangerous by the distinct increase in the number of new potential suppliers.

Although affected by the trends towards disarmament spreading over the European continent since the end of the Cold War, Western military deployment on the southern flank is still considerable. The risks to be countered are involvement in conflicts between the countries of the southern shores, subjection to minor forms of violence (terrorism, hijackings, etc.), political and military interdiction (on economic resources, on the freedom of navigation, etc.). In the face of such risks, the erosion of the balance of power constitutes a risk in itself. And the current military deployment is not always suited to the kind of action required (peace-enforcing and peace-keeping).

Economic risks. With the exception of the oil-exporting countries with a small population, the countries lying to the south of the Mediterranean have been going through an unprecedented economic crisis in the last ten years. Initially, at the beginning of the eighties, the recession in Western Europe brusquely terminated the expansion of both the exports from these countries and financial transfers from Europe. In parallel, the rise in interest rates increased their foreign debt burden, as most loans were taken on under commercial terms. These diverse factors forced the countries in question to adopt measures to contain the growth of internal demand. But these measures, in turn, caused a slowdown in the production growth rate and an increase in unemployment. Given the high population growth, the result was a fall in the standard of living; in some countries, the per capita income in real terms was lower at the beginning of the nineties than it had been ten years earlier.(7)

In the long term, the income differential is bound to widen as a result of population growth. In 2025, the total population of the Mediterranean Basin will be two and half times what it was in 1950, with an aggregate growth rate that is unprecedented throughout the region. The 75-year period in question will also witness a radical change in population distribution: while two-thirds of the total population was on the north shore in 1950, in 2025, over two-thirds will be on the south shore.(8) In other words, the countries that have fewer resources and a lower income will account for over 66 percent of the total population of the region. This situation will encourage continued migratory pressure towards Europe.

Economic and demographic factors play an important role in creating risks for European security. They are at the root of the frustrations and cultural tensions increasingly characterizing relations across the Mediterranean. Western models and achievements tend, at the same time, to impose themselves and to be denied. Thus, the South's attempt to escape these contradictions through its exasperated and conflictual search for and recovery of its identity. These processes have led to religious movements that put confrontation with the West and the North-South issue at the center of political action.

Politico-cultural risks. Confrontation with the West encompasses two different positions: a part of the Islamic movement wishes to strengthen its own culture while coexisting with the West; another part of the Islamic movement is openly against the West (and therefore against those who are willing to coexist with it). This hostility is reflected in the aspirations of success and independence of vast areas of the public and the widespread feeling that the West is an obstacle to these aspirations. Islamism is determined to recover that identity and those aspirations of national political achievement that the nationalist regimes after independence have hardly been able to satisfy. In this sense, Islamism is a new form of anti-imperialist and nationalist movement.

After the war against Iraq and the end of bipolarism, Islamic trends have intensified in the region; as a result of the outcome of the war, the political position of Saudi Arabia has also been strengthened.

However, Islamism today does not seem to harbour the international conflictuality that marked the Islamic Republic of Iran under Khomeini. Elements of international cooperation seem to be evident in the new trends, although they are often dictated by mere opportunism.

In any case, strengthening of the Islamic trends constitutes a growing risk for the traditionally more Westernized regimes such as Egypt and Jordan. In the

Maghreb, the clash between regimes and Islamists has brought to a halt the evolution begun towards more liberal forms of government. For the West and Europe, the risk is that these trends will fuel the many factors of conflict and instability already existing in the region.

Strategic risks and perceptions. Security perceptions in the areas to the south of the Mediterranean are dominated by two factors: the impact of the end of bipolarism and the West's evolution towards a new security order. The end of the bipolar system and its initial repercussions provoked contradictory sentiments in the southern Mediterranean countries: on the one hand, a sense of abandonment and marginalization deriving from the greater interest shown by the most important Western countries for the countries of the East; on the other, a feeling of being overly observed, often taken as a perception of threat. The war against Iraq was viewed by many in the Southern Mediterranean as the manifestation of a shift from East to South of the threat perceived by the West. And the agreement reached by the US and the USSR during the course of the crisis confirmed this view.

The impression of having replaced the USSR as the West's target is emphasized by the debate on the reform of security institutions in the West. In the South, this is seen as an attempt to maintain institutions of dominion, substituting the threat from the East with that from the South.

The risk to the West and Europe caused by negative perceptions generated by the ambiguities and delays in the debate on the reorientation of European and Western institutions should not be underestimated. It could act as a catalyst to the other risks.

## 2. The new geopolitics of European security

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact Organization, the USSR and the Soviet Communist Party has changed the West's basic strategic position. New global tension is no longer between East and West; it is now between the (Western) North and the whole of the East and the South. In fact, the crisis in the communist power in the East has given way to a series of crises of the same origins as those characterizing the South: ethnic problems, ecological disasters, underdevelopment, exaggerated nationalism, territorial disputes. This has led to the term "the new arc of crisis",<sup>(9)</sup> meaning the area stretching from North Africa across southwestern Asia to the Eurasian continent.

Inside this arc, a hierarchy of regions seems to be emerging in relation to their strategic and economic importance. The scale is reflected in the West's interest and attentiveness towards these regions. The US and Germany are both concentrating their interest on the crisis in the CIS; the US are also very much involved in the Middle East and Gulf crises, for the management of which they are chiefly responsible; the European Community is particularly interested in the crises in the Balkans and in the Maghreb.

In this new geopolitical situation, of concern to the Community is the extreme fragmentation of the southern flank--in particular between the western and eastern areas, that is, between the Maghreb and the Mashreq--and the different levels of commitment towards the various areas. These levels can be represented as three concentric circles. In the outermost circle, which includes the Horn of Africa and more generally, all of sub-Saharan Africa, the Community is committed above all to economic and humanitarian aid. It supports UN actions and contributes through its

own specific organization (ACP) and those of its members. In the intermediate circle, the countries of the Community are strongly committed to the socio-economic dimension of the Arab-Israeli negotiations, backing the political mediation led by the United States. In the inner circle, the efforts of the Community and its member states are directed above all to the Balkan crisis, but their long-time commitment to cooperation with Maghreb countries has led to expectations of special attention towards this region. Of note in this context is the existence of a solidarity group of "5+5" Western Mediterranean countries, including four Community countries-- France, Italy, Portugal and Spain (along with the five UMA countries and Malta).

### 3. What cooperation and security policies?

Security and cooperation across the Mediterranean is organized at three levels: the regional, the interregional and the global. These three levels constitute the response to the risks mentioned above.

The problems posed by conventional rearmament and non-conventional proliferation have a global dimension. The trends emerging at the UN Disarmament Conference on the convention banning chemical weapons and in the framework of the TNP and the MTCR are not wholly discouraging. Yet, the crucial negotiations have become those of the Group of Five members of the UN Security Council, established after the war against Iraq and following Bush's initiative (29 May 1991) aimed at control and limitation of technology transfers and at application of measures against nuclear proliferation in the Middle East<sup>(10)</sup> and a similar proposal by Mitterand (3 June 1991) in other regions.<sup>(11)</sup> The Group of Five (China, France, United Kingdom, USA, Russia) accounts for approximately 85 percent of the world's weapons exports. And progress within this group has not been encouraging. At the last meeting, the group failed to reach agreement on notification of individual transactions.<sup>(12)</sup> China has been blamed for this, but it has replicated that while the US is urging an agreement to limit weapons transfers to the Middle East, it was the main supplier to the region in 1991.

Recent attempts at regional agreements have been equally unsuccessful. The Damascus Pact, signed in the heat of the Gulf crisis (6 March 1991) by the Arab countries backing the UN coalition (the GCC countries, Syria and Egypt) has been without a follow-up. The failure to reach an agreement integrating the various levels of military power and wealth in the region, transforming ancient rivalries into synergies, certainly does not brighten the prospects for stabilization in the region.

The situation in the northern fringes of the region seems to be more encouraging. Three regional schemes for cooperation have been inaugurated: the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO),<sup>(13)</sup> the Black Sea Community<sup>(14)</sup> and the Caspian Sea Co-operation Zone (CSCZ).<sup>(15)</sup> However, these favourable trends on the fringes cannot make up for the absence of analogous trends in the heart of the region itself.

Security and cooperation at the interregional level is entrusted to the network of agreements between the Community and the individual countries lying to the south of the Mediterranean, the so-called Group of Ten or "5+5"<sup>(16)</sup> in the Western Mediterranean, which concerns itself with both economic cooperation and political aspects, and a proposal for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM).

Despite the Community's limits, its institutions for economic cooperation are

the most tested instrument available to the West for providing security and cooperation in the Mediterranean.(17) Furthermore, these institutions are highly complementary to global institutions for economic cooperation, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

Community institutions--both global ones and those of its member states--will have to increase the resources available to the less developed countries to the south of the Mediterranean and shift the priorities of their aid and cooperation policies. The most urgent measure required is debt relief. But measures aimed at debt relief and structural readjustment must be taken within the framework of a macroeconomic approach that is more attentive to employment and migration, two crucial factors for European security. The traditional approach used by the IMF and the World Bank in setting up structural readjustment policies will have to be reversed: instead of asking what macroeconomic strategy should be adopted by a country with a certain level of available domestic and international resources, the question should be what is the level of resources needed to keep unemployment and migratory pressure within levels tolerable to the international community and neighbouring countries.

Economic cooperation is very important in this context: the European Community and the Group of "5+5" have, each in their own way, a leading role to play in the Mediterranean.

The proposal to set up a CSCM is an attempt to combine the political and economic aspects of cooperation in an interregional framework embracing the various geopolitical areas gravitating around the Mediterranean, including the US and the former USSR.(18) The proposal for an institution destined to lay the foundation of collective security and to develop political, cultural and economic cooperation was put forward jointly by the Spanish and Italian Ministers of Foreign Affairs at Palma di Majorca on 24 September 1990. The underlying idea is that the causes for the current instability could be eliminated by institutionalized dialogue aimed at intensifying economic development, improving social conditions and setting up measures for confidence-building and transparency, thus laying the basis for collective security in the region.

Supported in principle by a large number of countries, the proposal nonetheless failed. For the moment at least, it has been shelved. Therefore, measures for security and cooperation in the Mediterranean rely, on the one hand, on the success of negotiations within the Group of Five and, on the other, on the action of European and global institutions for economic cooperation, as well as on any initiatives taken in the Western Mediterranean by the Group of "5+5".

#### 4. Conclusions

The crisis in the Gulf undoubtedly constituted an obstacle to setting up the CSCM. While the Spanish government ignored the proposal in 1991, putting greater emphasis on development of multilateral cooperation in the Western Mediterranean, the Italian government vigorously pursued it in its diplomacy, suggesting its suitability as a framework for resolution of the conflict under way in the Gulf and for management of its consequences. But both the conflict and its consequences were in the hands of the US and the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The efforts made by the Italian government proved vain: not only did they not succeed in establishing the CSCM, but they probably contributed to discrediting the idea.

Following the end of the war against Iraq, the idea of an Arab-Israeli conference in Madrid prevailed. This conference, which deals with aspects of security, but also of cooperation,<sup>(19)</sup> is very similar to the concept of the CSCM, but is led by the United States rather than by Italy and Spain (or the Community) and is restricted to the Middle Eastern area (rather than the broader area encompassed by the CSCM).

The success of this conference is of exceptional importance. It could bring about a regional agreement to stop the arms race and non-conventional proliferation and it could pave the way for the establishment of a regional cooperation and security institution. This has been well understood by the Italian government. Today, Italian diplomacy is actively following the negotiations and is contributing to their success, both bilaterally and through the Community.

Despite the priority given to the CSCM, cooperation in the Western Mediterranean has not been neglected by the Italian government. The Algerian crisis and its repercussions on the Maghreb have made it of the utmost importance. The Italian government is in a position to dedicate immediate resources and attention to this problem.

In any case, the problem of a permanent organization for security and cooperation in the region remains; and the CSCM could become topical again in the near future.

#### Notes

(1) R. Aliboni, *European security across the Mediterranean*, WEU Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper No. 2, Paris, 1991, with bibliography; Bertelsmann Foundation, Research Group on European Affairs headed by W. Weidenfeld, *Challenges in the Mediterranean -The European Response* (paper presented to the Conference of Barcelona, Oct. 7-8, 1991). See also A.E. Hillal Dessouki (ed.), *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, Praeger, New York, 1982.

(2) See A.H. Cordesman, *Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, Brassey's, London, 1991 and G. Kemp, *The Control of the Middle East Arms Race*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1991. More recently: A.H. Cordesman, *Current Trends in Arms Sales in the Middle East*, National Security Studies Program, Georgetown University, Dec. 1991, paper presented to the International Workshop on «Arms Control and the New Middle East Security Environment», Nof Ginosar, Israel, Jan. 6-9, 1992.

(3) *The Military Balance 1991-1992*, Brassey's for the IISS, London, 1991, pp. 212 ss.; figures at 1985 prices and exchange rates.

(4) *SIPRI Yearbook 1991, World Armaments and Disarmament*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991.

(5) See «President Bush's Middle East Arms Control Initiative: One Year Later», *Arms Control Today*, June 1992, pp. 11-16.

(6) The following remarks are based on M. Cremasco, «Le prospettive di controllo degli armamenti nelle regioni a Sud della NATO», in R. Aliboni (ed.), *Le minacce dal fuori area contro il fianco Sud della NATO*, research report for the CeMiSS, Rome, 1992 (unpublished).

(7) See R. Daboussi, *International Migration for Employment. Economic evolution*,

- demographic trends, employment and migration movements*, ILO, Geneva, 1991.
- (8) See M. Livi Bacci, F. Martuzzi Veronese (eds.), *Le risorse umane nel Mediterraneo. Popolazione e società al crocevia tra Nord e Sud*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990; Fondazione Agnelli, *Abitare il pianeta. Futuro demografico, migrazioni e tensioni etniche*, Torino, Edizioni della Fondazione Agnelli, 1989 and *Italia, Europa e Nuove Immigrazioni*, Torino, Edizioni della Fondazione Agnelli, 1990.
- (9) This notion was elaborated at the IISS's annual Conference in Zurich, Sept. 12-15, 1991; see G. Joffé's and C. Gasteyger's papers in *New Dimensions in International Security Part I*, Adelphi Papers, 265, Brassey's for the IISS, 1992; see also in the same proceedings Z. Brzezinski, *The Consequences of the End of the Cold War for International Security*.
- (10) «Middle East Arms Control Initiative», White House - Office of the Press Secretary, May 26, 1991, in *Arms Control Reporter*, 6-91/453.D.11-12.
- (11) *Le Monde*, June 4, 1991.
- (12) See «Impasse on Arms Accord», *International Herald Tribune*, June 1, 1992.
- (13) Formerly encompassing Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, it was enlarged in Teheran in February 1992 to include Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- (14) Established in Istanbul in June 1992, it includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and the Ukraine.
- (15) Set up in Teheran during the same meeting that enlarged the ECO, it includes Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan.
- (16) M. Rousset (ed.), *La Méditerranée occidentale espace de coopération*, Cahiers du Centre d'études de défense & de sécurité internationale, 12, Grenoble, March 1992; Fondation méditerranéenne d'études stratégiques, *La Méditerranée occidentale un espace à partager*, FMES, Bandol, 1991; CeMiSS, Délégation aux Etudes Générales, *Atti del seminario sulla sicurezza in Mediterraneo*, Rome Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 1991.
- (17) E. Rhein, *Bilan de la politique méditerranéenne de la Communauté (1975- 1988)*, Document de travail des services de la Commission, Bruxelles, 1989 and E. van der Linden «Europe and the Mediterranean. Past, present and future relations between the European Community and its Mediterranean neighbours», *Nato's Sixteen Nations*, Apr. 1990. See also F. Zallio, «Economic reforms and community aid in the Mediterranean developing countries», *The International Spectator* 2, 1991.
- (18) See Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Servizio Stampa e Informazione, *The Mediterranean and the Middle East after the war in the Gulf: the CSCM*, Rome, March 1991 (unpublished). See R. Aliboni, *European security across the Mediterranean*, cit.; J.L. Buhigas, «Una política de seguridad para el Mediterráneo», *Revista Española de Defensa*, n. 29-30, 1990, pp. 78-85; J. Olmo, «La reunión de Palma: la CSCE y el Mediterráneo», *Política Exterior*, 5, 19, Winter 1991, pp. 180-187.
- (19) Negotiations includes the following: refugees, economic cooperation, water resources and environmental issues.