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THE MEDITERRANEAN: A EUROPEAN VIEW

by Roberto Aliboni

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Summary

The Arab-Muslim regions are and will continue to be of special importance to the Western world. Yet their people are growing more and more hostile to the Western world, and instability within the region remains very high. This situation is not an immediate and direct threat for Western countries. However, it brings about costs and risks. Furthermore, instability together with new and old frustrations are increasingly fuelling rearmament in the region and the proliferation of unconventional arms. In the medium term a threat might emerge. These developments demand an appropriate and far-sighted response from the West.

Anti-Western feelings and instability in the Middle East are fed by many and complex factors. In this paper I wish, first, to point out what I see as the basic Western dilemma in its relations with the Southern regions; then to state a policy framework for Western action in this situation; and finally to make some considerations on the US-European relations in dealing with the "Oriental question".

The West must walk a very tight rope with respect to the Southern regions: Unconditional support to internationally cooperative Islam (i.e. the GCC countries) and to cooperative national regimes (like Egypt, Morocco, etc.) reinforces anti-Western radicalism, because this support goes by and large to repressive regimes. On the other hand, pushing these regimes, as repressive as they may be, to make an unconditional opening to radical Islam would often correspond to a mere shift from secular repressive regimes to religious ones. Finally, making Western cooperation directly conditional on the implementation of human rights and democratic institutions would aggravate the identity crisis of both religious and secular people in the region and eventually reinforce radical Islamism. What should the West do?

The only path to defuse anti-Western feelings and radicalism in the Arab-Muslim world in the medium-long term is that of supporting internationally cooperative regimes, both Islamic and secular, while leading them to integrate and moderate radical forces. The goal must be that of easing the repressive nature of the present regimes by enlarging national consensus within the framework of nation-building policies. In this very difficult transition the West cannot substitute itself for the governments and people of the Middle East in attaining more democratic polities. However, it can create international conditions conducive to such an attainment.

How can the West create those more conducive international conditions? Today, perhaps the most important policy to be carried out in the short-medium term refers to the success of the political aspects of the current Arab-Israeli negotiations, i.e. the bilateral negotiations. Any further progress elsewhere, particularly in the field of armaments and security, is contingent on the attainment of results in these negotiations. The immediate result of an arrangement between Israel and the Arab parties concerned in negotiations may well be an exacerbation of radicalism and a new harsh split in the region. However, an acceptable solution will also strengthen the forces committed to peace and stability in the region and to cooperation with the West in the international circle. In this new regional environment the main goals of Western policies should be the following.

First, the creation of an integrative regional environment combining economic resources and collective security is crucial if the region is to be stabilized and Western cooperation is to be more effective.

Second, an inter-regional framework for security and cooperation should be instituted. Such a framework was proposed by the Spanish and the Italian governments in Palma de Mallorca in September 1990 under the name of Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). The Gulf crisis prevented this proposal from being developed. However, its substance has been taken up by the Arab-Israeli negotiations in a global framework rather than in the regional environment suggested by the CSCM.

It must be pointed out that whereas there is no doubt that the bilateral arrangements can only be reached under US leadership, the multilateral aspects now included in the negotiations should more aptly be developed within the regional framework of a CSCM. In any event, whenever the principal Arab-Israeli problem is defused, the loose framework offered today by the negotiations should be replaced by an institutional framework like that of the CSCM in order to set up regular, collective inter-regional cooperation, in which the Europeans assume major responsibility.

Third, a mutual security programme should be developed within the CSCM, through the development of confidence building measures and limitations on armaments in the Middle East in addition to limitations enforced unilaterally and internationally (MTRC, TNP, CWC, Group of Five's regulations, etc.).

Fourth, again within the CSCM it should be possible to enlarge the multilateral dimension of economic cooperation and increase the overall effort. Both efforts and multilateralism are currently weaker than bilateral cooperation between Western countries. This is not to say that bilateral cooperation must disappear. The collective nature that should mark inter-regional Mediterranean cooperation should, however, require broader multilateralism and more resources.

Fifth, we should not forget that Western cooperation should not become a divisive factor in the Arab-Muslim area beyond the Mediterranean basin. It should not focus on the Arab countries and Israel and leave aside Iran. Defusing the Arab-Iranian dispute is perhaps less pressing than defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict, but is not less important for the future overall stability of the area and the security of the West. The continued international isolation of Iran is not positive for the stability of

the region. Present Western encouragement for Turkey to assume a higher regional profile in order to pre-empt Islamic influences may prove counterproductive for both Western interests in the area and the future of Turkish secular democracy. Likewise, the continued and inconclusive international guardianship of Iraq is an obstacle and a danger to the stability of the area.

Finally, this entire programme, from its Arabi-Israeli major premiss to its numerous corollaries, rests on the Western ability to carry out a balanced policy encouraging the opening of the Arab-Muslim polities and the enlargement of their consensus without compromising stability and future chances of democratization.

Throughout my paper I have spoken of the West and made very few references to the EC. Despite differences and even disputes, I don't think that there is any basic opposition between the American and the European allies in relation to the Arab-Muslim area or -as it was also called- the "Oriental question". It is particularly true today that the US, with the start of the Arab-Israeli negotiations and the recognition of the role of the Palestinians and the PLO, has adopted the policy that the Europeans have always advocated.

Though it is somewhat ironic that Europeans are excluded from the substance of this policy (i.e. the bilateral negotiations), they must loyally support it. And that is what they are doing. Furthermore, with the Declaration on the Maghreb adopted by the June 1992 European Council in Lisbon, the EC has been trying to take up a special role with respect to this particular region, within the framework of a kind of division of labour between the US and the EC.

Nevertheless, irony should not go too far. Nor should the division of labour-- as helpful as any division of labour may be. The end of the Cold War has been accompanied by fervid calls for an expanded European role. Furthermore, the "comprehensive" nature that NATO assigns to today's security seems to fit very well with European capacities and aspirations. But while the European role has been expanded eastward, this enlargement is very limited southward. In the South it is the US that is assuming an overwhelming role, maybe even more important than it had been during the Cold War.

I wonder whether this narrower European political role is in the interest of the Alliance and the Arab-Muslim countries. If the bilateral dimension of the Arab-Israeli negotiations succeeds, I don't think that the carousel of countries hosting the multilateral negotiations will be the most adequate forum for instituting a lasting and fruitful inter-regional cooperation around the Mediterranean basin. I think that international cooperation with the Arab-Muslim area should be brought back to the Europeans, that is to the framework foreseen by the proponents of the CSCM.

Having said that, the Europeans cannot wait for others to give them a role either. To be sure, the US will not oppose such a role, if they are reasonably associated to a common Atlantic policy. But, the Europeans must take up this role by themselves. Furthermore, they must do so within the EC or the European Union, with their full weight, and not individually or bilaterally. Great Britain and France should strike a

better balance between their role as permanent members of the UN Security Council and their role in the European Union and its emerging common security and foreign policy. Finally, the EC members should be more convinced that Mediterranean security, like the Eastern frontier, is a common concern.

Will the Europeans be able to unite their forces again and assume their responsibility? Will the US be able to devolve to collective institutions and to the allies the lonely power they inherited from the end of the Cold War? These issues, which do not pertain only to the Mediterranean, must be addressed if the "Oriental question" is to be resolved, by keeping in mind that they are issues of political substance and not of institutional engineering.

THE MEDITERRANEAN: A EUROPEAN VIEW

by Roberto Aliboni ¹

Si hay algo que ha caracterizado el pensamiento de todos desde el final de la guerra fría, es esa sensación fatalista de que EE UU proporciona el único foro y es tribunal, juez y jurado de apelación
(Edward W. Said)²

Throughout the long life of the British Empire, the expanse between the Russian border on the north and the Indian Ocean on the south, i.e. between Central Asia and the Gulf area, was of immense importance from the strategic point of view because it constituted the link between Great Britain and the Far East, more specifically India. The function of the area in providing communication between the two extremities of the Empire was so overwhelming that its definition in geographic terms remained rather loose. The term "Middle East", used for the first time by Alfred Mahan, was actually defined functionally rather than geographically:

The Middle East, if I may adopt a term which I have not seen, [is] an indeterminate area guarding a part of the sea route from Suez to Singapore.³

With the rise of American world predominance, the linking function of the Middle East has not fundamentally changed. Nor has its loose geographic meaning. The Middle East, strictly associated with the Mediterranean area on the one hand and the Persian Gulf on the other, is no longer a corridor to India, but it continues to provide access to a strategic platform at the juncture of three continents. Furthermore, this platform contains the world's most important oil reserves.

Over time, the Middle East has remained a region with a strong, global dimension. Throughout the Cold War era global factors shaped policies in the region and overshadowed regional factors. After the end of the Cold War, the multinational intervention against Iraq in 1990-91 showed that the area continues to be of global interest.

Whatever term is used to refer to the Arab-Muslim regions constituting the southern approaches to Europe, they are and will continue to be of special importance to the Western world. Yet their people are growing more and more hostile to the Western world, and instability within the region, i.e. South-South conflict, remains very high. This situation is not an immediate and direct threat for Western countries, particularly if compared with the threat that used to emanate from the now dissolved Communist bloc. However, it brings about costs and risks in the short term, in order to maintain order. Furthermore, instability together with

¹ Director of Studies, Italian Institute of International Affairs, Rome.

² *El País*, October 29, 1992.

³ Quoted in Marwan R. Buheiry, "Alfred Mahan: Reflections on Sea Power and on the Middle East as a Strategic Concept" in L.I. Conrad (ed.), *The Formation and Perception of the Modern Arab World*, The Darwin Press Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, 1989, pp. 157-169.

new and old frustrations are increasingly fuelling rearmament in the region and the proliferation of unconventional arms. In the medium term a threat might emerge. These developments demand an appropriate an far-sighted response from the West.

Anti-Western feelings and instability in the Middle East are fed by many and complex factors. The most important among them may be grouped under three headings: (1) the persistent gap between rich and poor, both domestically among individuals and externally among the regional countries; (2) the numerous ethnic, religious and national conflicts; (3) the rise of political and radical Islam. Let us comment on these factors and then try to suggest some policy orientations for the West to cope with them.

Rich vs. poor - In the region strong income inequalities among individuals prevail. The slowing down of migration opportunities within the region throughout the eighties for both economic and political reasons and high demographic pressure do not help alleviate such inequalities. The programmes of economic and financial restructuring now being implemented by many governments with the help of international economic organizations tend to exacerbate income inequalities in the short-medium term. The recovery of highly populated countries in the region is a very difficult and long task, even in an environment of positive international cooperation. In the meantime social malaise and suffering continue and even worsen. This situation favours political radicalization and, as unfair as it may be, public opinion often holds the West responsible. Though Western cooperation cannot do everything, it is clear that important and judicious help from the West could be an important factor to overcome the economic problems in the region and help it to stabilize socially.

Difficulties are also attributed to the rich countries of the area, that is, the oil-exporting and sparsely populated countries like Saudi Arabia, the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and Lybia.

The differences in wealth and population among rich and poor countries in the Arab-Muslim region, particularly among Arab countries, are seen by many observers as a natural factor of complementarity. The implementation of a regional solidarity based on this complementarity was at the heart of the debate following the huge influx of wealth in the region because of the increase in oil prices at the beginning of the seventies.

The 1990-91 crisis in the Gulf has led the GCC, Egypt and Syria to sign the so called Pact of Damascus. In this accord, the idea of complementarity is perhaps even clearer than in the previous debate, because the economic need for redistributing wealth regionally is coupled with the political task of providing collective security by making the huge military forces of the populated countries available to the defense of the rich, less populated countries of the region.

Both processes have failed or have delivered much less than expected. The reason is the deep-seated mistrust between the two sets of countries. Populated

countries like Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and Syria, heirs to ancient and proud civilizations, are probably not prepared to share decisions with "new countries" which have suddenly risen up from the oil of the desert; they consider that the power and the wealth that oil gives these new countries as a flagrant abuse of the destiny. On the other hand, the rich countries are aware of these feelings and do not want to risk being submerged politically and economically by their poor Arab partners.

Recently, similar basic feelings emerged in the already highly integrated European Community with the Danish referendum for ratifying the Treaty of Maastricht. Nevertheless, current hesitations in deepening Western European integration rest on a strong basis of working integration, whereas regional solidarity in the Middle East remains very poor. There is no doubt that moving towards more coherent and integrated regional cooperation is of fundamental importance for overcoming economic inequalities and social instability. As important as it may be, Western cooperation is almost helpless if it is not paralleled by an effort of regional integration.

Political crises - The dissolution of the Ottoman and colonial Empires and the arrangements which were made in their aftermath have left as many crises in the Middle East as has just been brought about by the dissolution of Communism in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The dissolution of an imperial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious or multi-national order is not the only factor in these crises. There are also conflicts that stem from ancient endogenous factors, for example, religious disputes. For the time being, crises in the Middle East seem more far-reaching regionally and internationally than crises in the former Soviet Union or even in Yugoslavia. The presence of Islamic people in Yugoslavia and especially in Central Asia seem to enlarge the Arab-Muslim crisis-area. The crisis in Tajikistan is strongly interlocked with developments in Afghanistan and might likewise involve inter-Islamic cleavages between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other.

However, the two most important crises, at least from the point of view of Western and international security, are the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict and the re-emerging Arab-Iranian dispute.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is now being negotiated. These negotiations constitute a positive event in themselves. Hopefully, the new American administration will pursue them with the same resolve and substantial fairness as the previous one did. Though a solution will not have immediate stabilizing effects and may even unleash new waves of radicalization, it would be a decisive step in the medium-long term stabilization of the region and the key to starting cooperative programmes there. At the moment, however, all that can be said in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict is that the West should do its best to keep the momentum and help negotiations to succeed.

Prospects are different in relation to the re-emerging Arab-Iranian dispute, in the sense that the West is not only unprepared to play a stabilizing role in this dispute, but it may even be playing a negative role, though inadvertently.

The more pragmatic era promised by the election of Mr. Rafsanjani as president of Iran has not emerged. Signs of a new Iranian radicalization are evident: from the strong rearmament policy pursued by Teheran to the dispute it initiated with the United Arab Emirates in relation to the islet of Abu Musa at the entrance of the Hormuz Strait and the help Iran is giving Sudan's Islamic government.

The re-emerging Iranian radicalization must have domestic causes which are still not entirely clear. In any case the vacuum left by the inconclusive war against Iraq is an important factor, as is the overall political situation that this war has brought about in the Gulf region. As a result of the war and the Damascus Pact countries' failure to implement a collective security agreement, the American military presence in the region has been reinforced and consolidated. Even the British and French presence is increasing. There is a Western-led armed presence in northern and southern Iraq. Turkey is encouraged by the West to assume a leading role in Central Asia. In addition to these security concerns, the weakness of Iraq and its state of near-fragmentation give rise to a situation of instability which is a source of both concern and attraction for Iran.

This same instability and the radicalization it is contributing to bring about in Iran are feared by the Arab countries. Egypt is concerned because Iran is supporting the Islamic government of Khartoum and because the latter is encouraging religious radicals in Egypt. This concern is shared by many Arab countries, which once again--as at the end of the 1970s--are afraid of the radical winds blowing from Teheran. The Gulf countries are less concerned because of the reinforced Western presence in their region and the fresh evidence of its effectiveness. But exactly this presence is regarded by the other Arab countries as a liability, because it contributes to rousing anti-Western feelings; it reinforces the religious movements domestically and it contributes to isolating and radicalizing Iran. All these concerns are leading the Arab countries to wish for the restoration of a strong Iraqi state.

The meaning of these developments is that the continuation of the Iraqi limbo and the growing Western military presence it entails in the region is contributing to reviving Iranian radicalism and may contribute to providing another Arab-Iranian crisis. As time passes, solving the Iraqi situation without accepting a full restoration of Mr. Saddam Hussein's regime is becoming more and more difficult. Nevertheless, such a difficult solution should be found, because the restoration of a working Iraqi state is also becoming increasingly urgent if another very severe crisis is to be averted.

Radicalism and religious trends - A large part of Arab Islam is not anti-Western. It cooperates with the West, or at least is prepared to accept some form of international coexistence. There is a good deal of opportunism in such a cooperative relation. Furthermore, cleavages cannot be avoided because of fundamental cultural opposition in respective notions of human rights. The tendency of the governments is to separate international cooperation from (domestic) human rights policies. Western governments, however, cannot prevent

their foreign policies from being affected by public opinion of human rights, particularly women's rights in the Arab-Muslim countries. Recently, this was shown very clearly by the refusal of the European Parliament to ratify the the EC-Morocco association agreement because of allegations of serious violations of human rights in that country.

The consequences of this basic cultural rift should not be overlooked. For example, before the military coup d'état in Algeria in January 1992, many observers were convinced that the advent of a Saudi-like Islamic regime in Algeria would not have prevented cooperative relations and business with Western countries. As right as this argument may be, one has to think of the fact that the imposition of Islamic customs in Algeria would not take place without strong reactions in Western Europe, particularly in France, because of personal, cultural and historic relations which simply do not exist in the case of Saudi Arabia or Pakistan.

Nonetheless, as important as difficulties with pro-Western Islamic regimes may be, anti-Western and radical Islam pose difficult problems for the West. The rise of radical Islam has a major role in the region today and its understanding is crucial to the formulation of Western policies.

In order to maintain unimpeded access to the area and to the Far East, the declining British Empire, particularly between the two World Wars, tried to reinforce and Westernize the Middle Eastern states by encouraging nation-building. Eventually, this policy failed because of the birth of the Israeli state and its further expansion and because of the almost unilateral support given by the US to Israel. This policy prevented Arab nationalism from becoming a factor of Westernization. In a first stage, it diverted Arab modernization and nationalism towards more or less close alliances with the Communist bloc. Subsequently, the failure of Arab nationalism in asserting its goals, particularly with the 1967 defeat, stirred the search in the religious realm of Islam for identity, self-based modernity and political assertion.

Broadly speaking, an important part of the Arab-Muslim world shifted from radical nationalism to radical Islamism through the seventies. Like the frustrated Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, Islamism in the 1970s and 1980s emerged as an anti-Western radicalization in response to political and cultural frustration. The emphasis remains on anti-Western radicalism, though the prevailing ideology changed. This means that political Islam, apart from certain important peculiarities, represents continuity in Western relations with the Middle East. This continuity should be noted in working out policies towards this region.

Reducing anti-Western feelings and radicalism requires a very complex foreign policy. Broadly speaking, the main factors which breed radical Islam are: the repressive nature of most regimes; the persistent economic inequalities; and the identity crisis brought about by the Arab-Muslim perceived inability to cope with Western modernity and power (a factor which includes the crisis with Israel).

Unconditional support to internationally cooperative Islam (i.e. the GCC countries) and to cooperative national regimes (like Egypt, Morocco, etc.)

reinforces anti-Western radicalism because this support goes by and large to repressive regimes. On the other hand, pushing these regimes, as repressive as they may be, to make an unconditional opening to radical Islam would often correspond to a mere shift from secular repressive regimes to religious ones. Finally, making Western cooperation directly conditional on the implementation of human rights and democratic institutions would aggravate the identity crisis of both religious and secular people in the region and eventually reinforce radical Islamism. Two known observers of political Islam have aptly described the West's dilemma in facing the rise of Islamism today in the following terms:

The West must walk a tightrope. On the one hand, if it encourages local governments to thwart moves toward greater participation out of the fear that a greater degree of Islamic self-expression will adversely affect Western clients and interests, it runs the risk of being insensitive to trends that may be in accord with its won long-term interests [i.e. democracy] . . . on the other hand, if it becomes actively involved in the attempt to "create" democratic institutions in Muslim societies, the West exposes itself to the charge of interference . . . The result in both cases, can be counterproductive--radicalization of Muslim movements.⁴

What should the West do? Though facing a tight rope, the West must learn to walk on it. The only path to defuse anti-Western feelings and radicalism in the Arab-Muslim world in the medium-long term is that of supporting internationally cooperative regimes, both Islamic and secular, while leading them to integrate and moderate radical forces. The goal must be that of easing the repressive nature of the present regimes by enlarging national consensus within the framework of nation-building policies. Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Jordan have, more or less timidly and effectively, taken this road. In this very difficult transition the West cannot substitute itself for the governments and people of the Middle East in attaining more democratic polities. However, it can create international conditions conducive to such an attainment. Which security and cooperation policies can the West carry out in its international relations with the Arab-Muslim regions? Today, perhaps the most important policy to be carried out in the short-medium term refers to the success of the political aspects of the current Arab-Israeli negotiations, i.e. the bilateral negotiations. Any further progress elsewhere, particularly in the field of armaments and security, is contingent on the attainment of results in these negotiations. The immediate result of an arrangement between Israel and the Arab parties concerned in negotiations may well be an

⁴ J.L. Esposito, J. Piscatori, «Democratization and Islam», *Middle East Journal*, 43, 3, Summer 1991, pp. 427-440.

exacerbation of radicalism and a new harsh split in the region. However, an acceptable solution will also strengthen the forces committed to peace and stability in the region and to cooperation with the West in the international circle. In this new regional environment Western international cooperation will have a chance to be more effective than it is today and will become very important in helping Arab-Muslim governments shift to more open and democratic polities by enlarging consensus in their countries. The main goals of Western international cooperation policies should be the following.

First, the creation of an integrative regional environment combining economic resources and collective security is crucial if the region is to be stabilized and Western cooperation is to be more effective. The institutionalization of regional and sub-regional solidarities is also a condition for inter-regional cooperation to become possible and effective, i.e. cooperation between diverse Arab-Muslim and Western entities (e.g. Euro-Arab cooperation).

Second, an inter-regional framework for security and cooperation should be instituted. Such a framework was proposed by the Spanish and the Italian governments in Palma de Mallorca in September 1990 under the name of Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). The CSCM's circle went well beyond the Mediterranean (in accordance with the functional notion of this area referred to at the beginning of this paper). It was expected to encompass all the Arab-Muslim areas (from Morocco to Iran), the EC, the then-Soviet Union and the USA. The Gulf crisis prevented this proposal from being developed. However, its substance has been taken up by the Arab-Israeli negotiations in a global framework rather than in the regional environment suggested by the CSCM, under the direct US responsibility rather than within the collective framework of a CSCM.

It must be pointed out that whereas there is no doubt that the bilateral arrangements can only be reached under US leadership, the multilateral aspects now included in the negotiations should more aptly be developed within the regional framework of a CSCM. In any event, whenever the principal Arab-Israeli problem is defused, the loose framework offered today by the negotiations should be replaced by an institutional framework like that of the CSCM in order to set up regular, collective inter-regional cooperation, in which the Europeans assume major responsibility.

Third, a mutual security programme should be developed within the CSCM, through the development of confidence building measures and limitations on armaments. In order to contain arms proliferation and the increase of armament levels in the Middle East, in addition to limitations enforced unilaterally and internationally (MTRC, TNP, CWC, Group of Five's regulations -whenever they come up!- etc.) it would be important to establish collective control. Furthermore, the existence of a collective security framework, once it is trusted, is in itself a powerful factor for limiting armaments. Finally, the inter-regional security framework should make progress in the North-South dimension conditional upon progress in the South-South dimension.

Fourth, again within the CSCM it should be possible to enlarge the multilateral dimension of economic cooperation and increase the overall effort. Both efforts and multilateralism are currently weaker than bilateral cooperation between Western countries. This is not to say that bilateral cooperation must disappear. The collective nature that should mark inter-regional Mediterranean cooperation should, however, require broader multilateralism and more resources. The extension to Morocco of a free trade area by the EC is a good harbinger to future developments. In contrast, the size of the EC Mediterranean programme of cooperation, despite recent additions, is still disappointing.

Fifth, we should not forget that Western cooperation should not become a divisive factor in the Arab-Muslim area beyond the Mediterranean basin. It should not focus on the Arab countries and Israel and leave aside Iran. Defusing the Arab-Iranian dispute is perhaps less pressing than defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict, but is not less important for the future overall stability of the area and the security of the West. The continued international isolation of Iran is not positive for the stability of the region. It may be that the West failed to make the necessary steps towards Iran immediately after the end of the war against Iraq and the election of Mr. Rafsanjani. Present Western encouragement for Turkey to assume a higher regional profile in order to pre-empt Islamic influences may prove counterproductive for both Western interests in the area and the future of Turkish secular democracy. Likewise, the continued and inconclusive international guardianship of Iraq is an obstacle and a danger to the stability of the area.

This entire programme, from its Arabi-Israeli major premiss to its numerous corollaries, rests on the Western ability to carry out a balanced policy encouraging the opening of the Arab-Muslim polities and the enlargement of their consensus without compromising stability and future chances of democratization.

This brings us to the very thorny issue of conditionality, i.e. making cooperation contingent on democratization or integration and so on. Whereas some conditionality in relation to economic or security goals is possible, conditionality in relation to democratization is definitely more difficult and uncertain.

The various remarks that have been made above suggest that the distinction between short-medium term and medium-long term policies must be very clear. Trying to attain changes in human rights and democracy through conditionality in international cooperation policies as a short-medium term goal may be a mistake. The extension of international cooperation should not be contingent on cultural and political changes in the short-medium term (in the sense that if these changes are not implemented, international cooperation is withdrawn). Instead, political and cultural change must be the goal and the result of international cooperation in the medium-long term.

This conclusion is not satisfactory, however, because it is evident that many will take home international cooperation without helping things to change. Unless we think that international cooperation will act as the midwife of history and that in the end good will overcome, some form of pressure must be set out, if not in the

form of conditionality at least within the framework of the regular diplomatic action, i.e. pragmatically. Furthermore, the gradual extension of collective inter-regional cooperation should interweave respective interests and actions and provide the best leverage towards progress in opening and stabilizing the Arab-Muslim polities.

Throughout this paper I have spoken of the West and made very few references to the EC and the European Union that is expected to come out of the Maastricht Treaty (if it is ratified). Despite differences and even disputes, I don't think that there is any basic opposition between the US and its NATO allies, particularly its European allies in relation to the Arab-Muslim area or -as it was also called- the "Oriental question". It is particularly true today that the US, with the start of the Arab-Israeli negotiations and the recognition of the role of the Palestinians and the PLO, has adopted the policy that the Europeans have always advocated.

Though it is somewhat ironic that Europeans are excluded from the substance of this policy (i.e. the bilateral negotiations), they must loyally support it. And that is what they are doing. Furthermore, with the Declaration on the Maghreb adopted by the June 1992 European Council in Lisbon, the EC has been trying to take up a special role with respect to this particular region, within the framework of a kind of division of labour between the US and the EC.

Nevertheless, irony should not go too far. Nor should the division of labour -as helpful as any division of labour may be. The end of the Cold War has been accompanied by fervid calls for an expanded European role. Furthermore, the "comprehensive" nature that NATO assigns to today's security seems to fit very well with European capacities and aspirations. But while the European role has been expanded eastward, this enlargement is very limited southward. In the South it is the US that is assuming an overwhelming role, maybe even more important than it had been during the Cold War.

I wonder whether this narrower European political role is in the interest of the Alliance and the Arab-Muslim countries. If the bilateral dimension of the Arab-Israeli negotiations succeeds, I don't think that the carousel of countries hosting the multilateral negotiations will be the most adequate forum for instituting a lasting and fruitful inter-regional cooperation around the Mediterranean basin. I think that international cooperation with the Arab-Muslim area should be brought back to the Europeans, that is to the framework foreseen by the proponents of the CSCM.

Having said that, the Europeans cannot wait for others to give them a role either. The US will not oppose such a role, if they are reasonably associated to a common Atlantic policy. But, the Europeans must take up this role by themselves. Furthermore, they must do so within the EC or the European Union, with their full weight, and not individually or bilaterally. Great Britain and France should strike a better balance between their role as permanent members of the UN Security

Council and their role in the European Union and its emerging common security and foreign policy. Finally, the EC members should be more convinced that Mediterranean security, like the Eastern frontier, is a common concern.

Will the Europeans be able to unite their forces again and assume their responsibility? Will the US be able to devolve to collective institutions and to the allies the lonely power they inherited from the end of the Cold War? These issues, which do not pertain only to the Mediterranean, must be addressed if the "Oriental question" is to be resolved, by keeping in mind that they are issues of political substance and not of institutional engineering.