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**THE MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY:  
ISSUES AND PROSPECTS**

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# THE MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

by Maurizio Cremasco

## 1. Introduction

NATO's Southern Region was often dubbed in the past 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 concerns were 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.

However, 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 constituting a naval threat NATO had to consider, and 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 political and military picture so different from the past as to justify a change in NATO's attitude ? Are there elements in this picture that may convince NATO to devote more attention to its Southern Flank ? Are there new roles for NATO and WEU members? Is there more room for NATO's structural and operational changes?

The analysis of the Mediterranean security in the Post-Cold War era and Italy's foreign and security policy toward the area will be conducted against the background of three simple truisms.

It is a truism to say that the Mediterranean is the linchpin between the North and the South of Europe and constitutes the strategic backyard of any military crisis opening in the Gulf region or in the Horn of Africa.

It is a truism to say that while NATO's military weaknesses in the Southern Flank have been eliminated by the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the political weaknesses, such as the Greek-Turkish antagonism and the endemic domestic political and social instability of all NATO Southern members are still present.

Finally, it is a truism to affirm that the Mediterranean is one of the most unstable region of the world, a region where old and new political problems, uncertain economic development, religious fanaticism, high demographic growth rates, weak or nonexistent democratic systems, high levels of armaments, proliferation risks, and hegemonic foreign policies are all factors which contribute to a latent status of tension and to endemic controversies and conflicts.

## **2. The main elements of the geostrategic and geopolitical situation**

### **a. The disintegration of the Soviet Union.**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the creation of a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), has eliminated any remnant of the Soviet threat and even put into question the future presence and role of Russia in the Mediterranean.

Even though there are still serious uncertainties on the final outcome of the political and economic process presently going on in the former Soviet Union, at least three interconnected considerations can be drawn from it.

First, the political and security interests of Russia will be necessarily different from, and have more limited scope than those of the Soviet Union. The Mediterranean would probably be considered as a low priority region, at least for the short-medium term.

Second, it would be now a lot more difficult for the Mediterranean Third World countries to use -- as they often did in the past -- US-USSR ideological differences, political rivalries and confrontational attitudes in the international arena for pursuing national interests, or to utilize their special relationship with the Soviet Union for acquiring weapons, shielding their foreign policy objectives and somewhat constraining the potential range of American actions.

The presently more assertive Russian foreign policy notwithstanding, and without excluding the possibility of a further trend towards "neo-imperial" attitudes and reactions, this change from the past should not be underestimated, particularly in assessing present and future NATO security and defence requirements in the Mediterranean area.

Third, NATO has ceased to see the East as its potential "enemy". Moreover, in the Mediterranean, the presence and operational readiness of the former Soviet Mediterranean Fleet (SOVMEDRON) have been affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union to the point of practically voiding NATO maritime forces' traditional missions.

There are also doubts about the final assignment of the Black Sea Fleet. A compromise was reportedly reached between Moscow and Kiev on the possession of the Fleet. What it will entail in terms of its military mission and operational capabilities is still unclear. It appears fair to assume, however, that together with its lost military tasks vis-à-vis NATO, any Russian residual

naval presence will not be capable of performing a credible function as an instrument of foreign policy.

There is another consideration to be drawn from the dissolution of the traditional threat picture and the consequent weakening of the perception of NATO as the indispensable framework for European security and defense.

This weakening appears to be deeper in the South where peculiar geopolitical and geostrategic factors play a more evident role. In particular, new requirements seem to emerge in Greece and Turkey, more in line with a national vision of foreign and security policy interests.

The tendency toward the re-orientation of foreign and security policy is clearer in Turkey in part as a result of its unsuccessful attempt to become a member in the EC, in part as a consequence of the merging of Islamic and nationalistic sentiment among the population, and in part due to the fact that the independence of the Islamic republics in the former Soviet Union opens new spaces for Turkey's foreign and economic policies.

If nothing is done, this re-orientation might, in the long run, not only progressively detach Ankara from a European security and defense system, but also stimulate a national approach to present and future regional crises.

**b. The new risks.**

The new risks emerging from the Mediterranean region are outside NATO's area of responsibility and mainly political and economic in nature.

This does not mean that the military risks have totally disappeared. Nuclear and chemical proliferation and the proliferation of long range surface-to-surface missiles are clear possibilities and constitute a potentially significant threat.

It does mean, however, that it is now very difficult to formulate scenarios of large scale military confrontation within NATO's area of responsibility, or to advance hypotheses of short warning attack against NATO Mediterranean countries' territories, or to sustain theories of an imminent and serious threat from the South represented by the military capabilities of the North African and Middle Eastern countries.

**(i) Military risks.**

The readiness to use political pressure and military force is widespread in the region. This is fueled by latent antagonism rooted in traditional controversies and hegemonic attitudes, the tendency to contain domestic tensions by creating external enemies, and the high level of armaments.

It is outside the scope of this paper to dwell on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the military capabilities of the Southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. I would, instead, offer just two considerations.

Though the drive for the acquisition of conventional and unconventional weapons continues, very often the level of training of the armed forces does not match the technological

sophistication of the armaments. Problems should be expected in relation to the technical and logistic support and the maintenance of the weapons systems acquired abroad.

Even though the military capabilities of the Southern Mediterranean countries (considered individually or collectively), are no match for the military forces of the WEU or NATO, the military aspects of any Southern Region crisis which could directly or indirectly affect European security should not be underestimated.

**\* Ballistic Missile Proliferation.**

Contrary to the 1989 declarations by CIA's director, William Webster, that around 20 Third World countries would be capable of producing ballistic missiles by the year 2000, the pace of surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) proliferation has slowed since the mid-1980s.

Today, only Israel has a complete missile force. Only one other country -- North Korea -- continues to make unchecked progress. Iraq's program lies in the rubble of the country's military industry, and its missile arsenal has been destroyed under U.N. supervision. India's program, technically the most advanced in the Third World, together with that of China, has slowed down, while those of Argentina, Brazil, Libya, South Korea and Taiwan appear to be stalled or moribund. Other countries which were trying to develop ballistic missiles of their own -- such as Iran and Pakistan -- seems now more dependent on their ability to find technologies and expertise from a foreign supplier.

The former Soviet Union can no longer be considered a potential supplier of ballistic missiles. Only India, China and North Korea are in a position to provide expertise, know-how, and technical support, or supply missile systems. In the past, only China and North Korea had been willing to export their systems. China seems to have accepted more stringent rules, including the ban on exporting ballistic missile technologies to the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> North Korea, on the other hand, seem to be still in business, the latest export to the Mediterranean area being the 24 SCUD-C missiles (with a range of about 500 Km) and 20 mobile launchers delivered to Syria in March 1991.

However, if one considers present possession and eventual acquisition of SSMs, instead of domestic production capability, the emerging picture is different, more militarily significant and showing how close are the geostrategic links between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.

Today, Saudi CSS-2 ballistic missiles can target one third of Libyan territory and, in the north, they can reach beyond the territory of Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Israeli JERICHO II missiles can easily strike Riyadh, Baghdad and Bengasi. Iraqi modified SCUD missiles have demonstrated that they can reach Tel Aviv. The possibility that ballistic missiles with a range of 1500-3000 Km. would eventually be acquired by north-African countries will not only strengthen those military links -- Libya would be able to target Cairo and Tel Aviv, while even Algeria could attack Israeli territory with CSS-2 type missiles -- but will also present the southern European countries with a totally new strategic equation. The eventuality that the possession of ballistic missiles will be

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<sup>1</sup>. In November 1991, China agreed to adopt MTCR guidelines which preclude the sale of M-11 missiles to Pakistan and M-9 missiles to Syria in exchange for the removal of U.S. sanctions imposed on 1991. Moreover, in February 1992, China gave written assurance to the U.S. that it will abide to the MTCR guidelines. See "The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)", The Arms Control Association, Background Paper, July 1992.

matched with a chemical and/or nuclear capability is an additional strong factor of instability with unifying interregional repercussions and a dramatic impact on European security.

However, apart from Turkey which is already within the range of Syrian SCUD and SS-21 SSMs, the Southern European countries consider the potential proliferation of ballistic missiles in the Mediterranean region as a threat that is still distant in the future, and none of them is seriously thinking about an Anti Tactical Ballistic Missile (ATBM) system.

**\* Nuclear proliferation.**

The main problem in the domain of nuclear proliferation is the new suppliers.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the list of states capable of exporting nuclear material, equipment, technology and services is large and growing. The emergence of new nuclear suppliers that are not bound by existing international controls could erode the system of export restraints and threaten the viability of the non-proliferation regime.

At least eleven countries (Argentina, Brazil, India, Israel, Japan, Pakistan, China, South Africa, South Korea, Spain and Taiwan) can be considered emerging nuclear suppliers. Among these countries, the one with the most advanced and self sufficient nuclear capacity, and also the most consistent critic of the existing NP regime -- India -- has been largely inactive as a nuclear exporter. Among the other emerging supplier states, only China to date has been a major actor on the field of export of sensitive nuclear material and technology. However, Spain and Argentina are becoming significant players, and Japan is likely to become one soon.

Few transactions of sensitive nuclear technology have actually taken place involving new suppliers, and this appears to be the result of the restraint shown by most new suppliers. In fact, one should not equate the ability to export sensitive nuclear technology with the political readiness to do so.

The nuclear proliferation picture in the Mediterranean area is characterized by the special sensitivity of the Arab countries about the issue of nuclear weapons (in particular vis-à-vis Israel's nuclear status and attitudes toward non-proliferation), and by the uncertainty about the real scope and present status of the nuclear programs of some states of the region.

**Syria.**

Ten years after the nuclear cooperation agreement with India in 1981,<sup>3</sup> Syria (a party to the NPT and a member of the IAEA) was reportedly seeking to proceed with a nuclear program whose goals are unclear and could eventually lead to the construction of nuclear weapons. The first step was the attempt to acquire a research reactor from China. In December 1991, the sale approved by Beijing was stalled by the Syrian refusal to sign the standard agreement with the IAEA required by the NPT.<sup>4</sup> In January 1993, Syria was listed by the Russian Foreign Intelligence

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<sup>2</sup>. On the subject, see the very informative article "The New Nuclear Suppliers" of William C. Potter in ORBIS, Spring 1992, pp. 199-210.

<sup>3</sup>. Very little is known about the actual sharing of nuclear technologies and the range of cooperation.

<sup>4</sup>. The agreement provides that all nuclear facilities in the country, including those subsequently built, would be subjected to IAEA controls. Leonard S. Spector, "Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East", Orbis, Spring 1992, pp. 189-190. On the press reports of the Syrian attempt at acquiring uranium from Namibia, see Guido Olimpio, "Quel piccolo jet é straordinario: sembra proprio una bomba", Corriere della Sera, 21 ottobre 1992, p. 8.

Agency among the 16 countries which were alleged either to possess or to have plans to acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup> Little is known about the present status of Syrian nuclear program, but a 30 MW research reactor is reportedly under construction.

Though it might be attributed to a growing sense of isolation stemming from the loss of the Soviet Union as the protector power, and the fragmentation of the old international system based on military alliances and treaties of friendship and cooperation, it seems odd that Syria would try to become a nuclear power when Iraq's nuclear ambitions have been drastically curtailed, and talks with Israel may eventually include also arms control issues and strict security arrangements.<sup>6</sup>

### **Algeria.**

Apart from the small (one megawatt) research reactor bought from Argentina, which has been operational since March 1989,<sup>7</sup> Algeria (a member of the IAEA but not a party to the NPT) did not appear to have nuclear ambitions until recently. But in 1991, a significant nuclear project was finally unveiled after being kept secret for some years by a CIA report to the U.S. Congress: a Chinese-supplied research reactor<sup>8</sup> was being built near the town of Ain Oussera.

Many aspects of this project gave cause for concern:

- its initial secrecy,<sup>9</sup> and the fact that the facility is said to be protected by ground-to-air defensive systems;
- the military potential of the reactor, the technical feasibility to operate it at higher power than declared, and eventually to enlarge it, thus increasing Algeria's capability over time to acquire sufficient plutonium for atomic bombs;
- the scarce justification of a civilian nuclear program in a country rich in oil and gas.
- the lack of a clear military threat and of security requirements which could stimulate and justify nuclear ambitions.

Though Algeria restated its pledge to sign the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in December 1993,<sup>10</sup> no actions followed during 1994. Given Algeria's political and economic crisis, it could be argued that the problem is not so much for the present. However, the situation could change if an Islamic fundamentalist regime were established in Algeria and if the new regime decided to proceed -- with Iran's technical support and financial assistance -- toward the acquisition of a nuclear military capability, covertly within or openly outside the NPT.

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<sup>5</sup>. Keesing's Record of World Events, March 1993, p. 39393.

<sup>6</sup>. The Jordan-Israel draft accord considers the discussion of issues regarding arms control and the destruction of unconventional weapons. The same issues could be part of a Syria-Israel agreement.

<sup>7</sup>. Though Algeria is not a signatory to the NPT, the reactor was placed under IAEA safeguards.

<sup>8</sup>. The power of the reactor was initially rated at 40 megawatts or larger (a size more apt for plutonium production than for peaceful research) and then downgraded to about 15 megawatts. In May 1991, China and Algeria revealed that 15 megawatts was actually the maximum power rating and that normal operations would be conducted at 10 megawatts. See John M. Deutch, "The New Nuclear Threat", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1992, pp. 131-132, and Leonard S. Spector, "Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East", *ORBIS*, Spring 1992, pp. 190-192. See also Vipin Gupta, "Algeria's Nuclear Ambitions", *International Defense Review*, 4/1992, pp. 329-331.

<sup>9</sup>. The project was discovered only through U.S. intelligence satellites.

<sup>10</sup>. The announcement was made by the Foreign Affairs Minister Mohamed Salah Dembri during the inauguration of the Ain Oussera nuclear reactor. *MEED*, 14 January 1994, p. 11. The Benjedid government had also unexpectedly announced that Algeria would join the NPT on 7 January 1992, only few days before it resigned.

## **Egypt.**

Egypt is both a member of the IAEA and a party to the NPT and there is no present concern about its potential inclination to proliferate. Nor it is feared that its Soviet-supplied 10 MW research reactor could or would be used for covert nuclear programs. However, Egypt recently stated its intention of not signing an extension of the NPT at the revision conference to be held in Geneva (from 17 April to 12 May 1995) unless Israel also signs, thus finally becoming a party to the Treaty.<sup>11</sup> If Cairo maintains its position, and Israel keeps on refusing to sign the NPT, the Egyptian example may be followed by other Arab countries, thus opening a totally new and very disturbing nuclear proliferation scenario in the Mediterranean area.

### **\* Chemical proliferation.**

There are still conflicting reports about the number of countries either possessing, about to possess, or trying to develop chemical weapons. Agreement is also lacking on the level of the capabilities achieved by the proliferating countries in the Third World.

However, in the Mediterranean area, Egypt, Libya, Israel and Syria are believed to possess chemical weapons. Another country, Algeria, has the industrial infrastructure and the basic technology for the production of chemical agents.

Of special concern is Libya's chemical weapons production programs at Rabta, a facility in the middle of the Libyan desert protected by high fences and an anti-aircraft defence system, which is reportedly in full operation again after being damaged by fire in March 1990,<sup>12</sup> and at a new underground facility located at Tarhunah, 65 km. South-East of Tripoli.<sup>13</sup>

### **(ii) The political and economic risks.**

#### **\* Islamic fundamentalism.**

I said earlier that the new risks are mainly political and economic in nature. This does not imply, however, that they do not have precise overtones in terms of European security.

Let us try to analyze them in a very schematic way.

The first risk is the spread in north Africa of Islamic fundamentalist regimes. An Islamic militant regime in Algeria will represent for the fundamentalist movements in other north-African countries a strong incentive for their struggle for power and a new source of political and financial support, possibly even arms supplies. Thus, repercussions are likely to be felt in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and even Morocco with destabilizing effects on the whole African continent.

It can be argued that the foreign policy of a fundamentalist Algeria will be different from that of Iran. However, it could also be argued that there will be at least one common feature: the

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<sup>11</sup>. John Lancaster and Burton Gellman, "Nuclear 'NO' Sours Egypt-Israel Relations", International Herald Tribune, 20 January 1995, p. 1, and 23 January 1995, p. 2. See also Financial Times, 24 January 1995, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>. After the fire, and the unanswered questions about possible sabotage, real extent of damages and presumable length of work stoppage, new press reports surfaced again in April 1992 about the full operational status of the chemical plant. "British firm helped Gadaffi make poison gas missiles", Sunday Times, 5 April 1992, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup>. On German (Die Welt) and American (The New York Times) press reports see Keesing's Record of World Events, February 1993, p. 39344.



strong anti-Western attitude that is typical of Islamic fundamentalism. Thus, the presence of one, and possibly more, Islamic regimes on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea is bound to influence European security in the years to come.

This influence could be brought to bear, either directly fomenting instability in the region and adopting a strong anti-Israel policy, or indirectly through covert aid to terrorist groups, and the use of Islamic supporters among the 4.4 million foreigners from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean who are presently living in Europe.

Finally, the pretense of Islamic regimes to fully control and regulate all aspects of social and private citizens' life will force the more educated and liberal to emigrate, thus enlarging the flow of people toward Europe. It would be difficult for the European countries to refuse this new tide of emigrants, since they could rightly expect to be considered political refugees.

**\* Population explosion.**

The migration problem is tied to another problem of the Mediterranean region -- the population explosion.

The European population currently represents 61 percent of the total population of the Mediterranean area. If growth continues at the present rate, that percentage will drop to less than 54 percent by the year 2000 and to approximately 47 percent by 2015: the population of the European countries will increase by approximately 13 million in that time, while that of the other Mediterranean countries will grow by more than 170 million. In the year 2015, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Turkey will have a total population of 270 million people.<sup>14</sup>

Although demographic projections cannot be taken as the basis for predicting migration potentials, it is fair to assume that the rapid increase of population is going to exacerbate the political, social and economic problems of the Southern Mediterranean countries.

Apart from giving fresh ammunition to those fundamentalist movements which are preaching Islam as the only solution, these problems will increase the demographic pressure on the EU, already confronted with the task of integrating 7.9 million foreigners who are not nationals of any of the member states.

**\* The North-South gap.**

The root of the political and social malaise which fuels radical attitudes, social unrest and migration is the growing economic gap between the North and the South of the Mediterranean. The population on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean generates only 6 percent of the total GDP. The average per capita income of the inhabitants of the Northern shore is about 11 times that of their Southern counterparts, a ratio which has not changed significantly in the last 25 years.

Econometric models indicate that a very high GDP growth rate is required in Southern Rim countries to prevent unemployment from raising.<sup>15</sup> In the eighties, GDP growth rates for North Africa, ranging from three to six per cent, were largely consumed by the steep population

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<sup>14</sup>. Cooperation and Stability in the Mediterranean: An Agenda for Partnership. The International Spectator, n. 3, July-September 1994, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>. Cooperation and Stability in the Mediterranean, The International Spectator, cit., p. 5.

increase. Moreover, industrialization is often domestically oriented and unsuccessful by market standards, and every country depends, though in different degree, on technical and financial aid from outside. Finally, in the South, agriculture production is insufficient to feed the population -- in fact, the region from Morocco to Egypt has become a net importer of agricultural produce.

## **2. What Nato role in the Mediterranean?**

If the previously outlined picture of the situation in the Mediterranean region and the assumptions about its future prospects are correct, then what role can NATO play in it?

The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet threat has ended the traditional Alliance's mission, but has not ended its capability to perform other functions which could help stability, safeguard Europe's security and ultimately provide for its defence.

The clear operational parameters within which NATO used to operate in the Southern Region are being replaced by a more complex environment of multifaceted and multidirectional risks difficult to predict and assess. NATO's potential tasks are made more difficult by: (i) the lack of a security identity among the Mediterranean countries and thus, the very unlikely chance of extending to the Mediterranean security frameworks already applied to the East; (ii) the trend toward increased political instability and further militarization of the Mediterranean region, and the eventual proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery means; (iii) the different positions on how and with what tools to approach and deal with Mediterranean issues among NATO allies; (iv) and the possibility, though presently remote, of a re-nationalization of the defense efforts of the Southern European countries if the Western security organizations should lose their credibility and be considered unable to fulfill national security requirements.

The NATO role of Southern allies has changed in political and military terms. Somewhat paradoxically, today's reduced military commitments require a stronger political commitment for the maintenance of NATO's unity and the modernization of the armed forces to make them capable of facing the new NATO tasks, which today may also involve the participation in out-of-area operations and peacekeeping missions.

So far, NATO has shown itself to be capable of performing U.N. missions in the framework of efforts by the international organizations to find a diplomatic solution to the war in Bosnia. However, it can be argued that the difficulties NATO is presently facing in being the U.N. military arm in the management of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia would pale in comparison to those NATO will be confronted with in case of peacekeeping or peace-enforcing operations in North-Africa or the Middle East. Moreover, its potential roles are bound to be further complicated by the anti-NATO bias of the several Arab countries which consider the Western Alliance an American military instrument. Finally, consensus among the Sixteen (the Twenty or Twentytwo in a not too distant future) might be more difficult to achieve.

In January 1995, NATO's Council decided to establish regular contacts with Southern Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia) with the aim of

strengthening dialogue and confidence.<sup>16</sup> More recently, Secretary General Willy Claes has declared that NATO has a role to play in helping the Mediterranean countries to face the Islamic fundamentalism that he defined as big a threat as communism once was.<sup>17</sup>

However, the range of actions NATO could eventually take in this field appears quite limited, and a cautious attitude on the part of the interested Arab countries should be expected. It is debatable if NATO could do more than merely assist in the gathering and sharing of sensitive intelligence information, and in the command and control of the armed forces by providing technologically advanced C3 assets. In fact, the more useful political and economic support could be better provided by the European organizations and by single European countries -- or by the United States.

Perhaps, NATO could play a more effective role in countering the proliferation of WMD. Meeting in Istanbul on 9 June 1994, the North Atlantic Council agreed upon an "Alliance Policy Framework on Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction".<sup>18</sup> The main decisions were to assess the potential proliferation risk presented by States on and beyond NATO's periphery, and to contribute to the implementation and strengthening of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation norms and agreements, as well as to address the military capability needed to discourage WMD proliferation and use, and if necessary, to protect NATO territory, populations and forces. This would not be enough, and it is open to question if NATO is prepared to play a true counterproliferation role, that is to stop WMD proliferation in the Mediterranean area by military means.

Moreover, NATO could sponsor, support and eventually guarantee regional CBMs (Confidence Building Measures) and arms control agreements. A role in the CBMs domain would fit into the first phase of the new NATO policy towards the Southern Mediterranean countries, which entails the building of reciprocal confidence between NATO and these countries and among themselves.

Finally, another field of effective use of NATO military capabilities could be in the air and naval enforcement of sanctions and economic embargoes (such as that conducted in the Adriatic in the framework of operation "SHARP GUARD"), or in all those maritime operations for the achievement of sea control -- naval blockades of sea areas, choke points, channels, straits and ports.

### **3. What European role in the Mediterranean?**

NATO's European allies can act in the Mediterranean either singularly, or together within the two frameworks of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union

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<sup>16</sup>. Atlantic News, No. 2688, 25 January 1995, p. 1. See also "La OTAN crea una politica mediterranea que excluye de momento la colaboracion con Argelia", El Pais, 9 February 1995.

<sup>17</sup>. Marcus Warren, "NATO's chief spotlights the new foe", The Sunday Telegraph, 5 February 1995. "NATO's Claes War", The Times, 9 February 1995. William Drozdiak, "NATO Turns Attention To Islamic Extremists", International Herald Tribune, 9 February 1995, p. 1. On the reactions of NATO Ambassadors to Mr. Claes declarations, see "NATO Chief Under Fire for Islam Remark", International Herald Tribune, 15 February 1995, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>. Atlantic News, n. 2631 (Annex), pp. 5-7.

(EU), and the WEU.

In a report devoted to the likely development of the CFSP,<sup>19</sup> the EU clearly indicated the Maghreb and the Middle East as two areas in which the EU Member States intend to implement joint actions, and nuclear non-proliferation issues, the control of transfer of military technology to third countries, and control of arms export as security domains which also may be objects of joint actions.

In the years after its revitalization in 1991, the WEU has moved to strengthen its operational capabilities and, somewhat in parallel with NATO, stated its willingness to support, on a case by case basis and in accordance with its own procedures, "the effective implementation of conflict-prevention and crisis-management measures, including peacekeeping activities of the CSCE or the U.N. Security Council".<sup>20</sup> The WEU members have designated multinational (such as the Eurocorps) and national conventional forces for military missions to be conducted under the authority of WEU. The adoption of a Joint Declaration has also set the conditions for the use by the WEU of the NATO Multinational Division (Central) and the UK/Netherlands Amphibious Force in the framework of the concept of Joint Combined Task Forces (CJTF).<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, in a document which constituted its first contribution regarding the aims, scope and means of common defence policy, the WEU clearly stated that European security also has a Mediterranean dimension which should be taken into consideration in framing a European defence policy. The WEU recognized that the problems of the Mediterranean are primarily of a political, economic and social nature and thus, have to be addressed mainly through political and economic means. In this context, a Mediterranean Group was established in 1987 and meetings with government experts from Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia have been held. The WEU intends to further develop the dialogue and to gradually expand it to other non-WEU Mediterranean countries.<sup>22</sup> The WEU governments are also ready to address new security challenges, many of which are typical of the Mediterranean region, such as humanitarian emergencies, proliferation, terrorism, international crime and environmental risks, including those related to disarmament and the destruction of nuclear and chemical weapons.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, France, Italy and Spain are developing an on-call air and sea rapid intervention force for the Mediterranean (EUROMARFOR) and an on-call ground force,<sup>24</sup> both answerable to WEU -- a sort of Southern Eurocorps.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>. At the European Council held in Lisbon in June 1992.

<sup>20</sup>. Petersberg Declaration, WEU Council of Ministers, Bonn, 19 June 1992.

<sup>21</sup>. The concept of CJTF envisions the "development of separable but not separate capabilities" which could respond to European requirements and was endorsed in the Brussels NATO Summit of January 1994.

<sup>22</sup>. "Noordwijk Declaration of the WEU Council of Ministers" and "Preliminary Conclusions on the Formulation of a Common European Defence Policy Examined by the WEU Council of Ministers in Noordwijk", 14 November 1994, Europe Documents, n. 1910 and 1911 respectively.

<sup>23</sup>. Preliminary Conclusions, cit., Europe Document, n. 1911, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>. The creation of an on-call ground force was an Italian initiative. It was discussed and approved in the WEU Council of Ministers in Luxembourg on 22 November 1993. The force will be composed by three brigades (French, Italian and Spanish) earmarked for WEU assignment. Though the force would be on-call, a permanent Hqs is expected to be established in Italy or Spain.

<sup>25</sup>. In November 1994, French, Italian and Spanish forces conducted a major exercise simulating the evacuation of civilians from a country undergoing internal conflict. The exercise called "Tramontana 94" was the third of its kind. The first, named "Farfadet 92" was held in France in 1992; the second, named "Ardente 93" was held in Italy in 1993.

The emerging picture is one of a keen European interest for the situation in the Mediterranean region, an acute awareness that its future developments could negatively impact on European security, and a stated readiness on the part of the WEU countries to take their share of responsibility for the promotion of stability and security. This does not necessarily mean that the EU/WEU would be more willing and eager than NATO to act in the region, but it does mean that the European organizations have finally recognized that they have a significant role to play and they must play it.

One point, however, should be underlined. So far, only France, Italy and Spain seem ready and willing to assume greater political responsibilities and military commitments in the WEU framework.

The risk of developing a WEU operational role which would lead to unnecessary duplication of structures and assets (particularly in command, control and communications) should be avoided. This risk appears particularly acute in the Mediterranean, because there might be the temptation to try to alleviate the complexity of the crisis management scenarios, and resolve the differences in membership among Southern European countries (Turkey is still not a full member of the WEU and the EU, while France is still outside NATO's integrated military structure), by establishing parallel military capabilities, infrastructures and C3 assets.

#### **4. Italy and the Mediterranean region**

Italy sees the Mediterranean region from a unique vantage point. In fact, because of its geographical projection into the Mediterranean Sea, military commitments in NATO, and political and economic relations with the riparian nations, Italy is "by necessity" a Mediterranean country. But in geostrategic, political and economic terms, Italy is also, again "by necessity", a European country.

Thus, the Mediterranean "vocation" of Italian foreign policy coexists with an Euro-Atlantic role. This coexistence has sometimes led to ambiguities in policy formation and vacillation between the Mediterranean and Euro-Atlantic projections causing confusion and misinterpretation among friends and allies. However, Italian foreign policy has shown remarkable consistency through the years.

Since mid-1979, Italy has adopted a foreign policy of 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: (i) the deployment of American cruise missiles in Italy in 1979-1981; (ii) the treaty signed with Malta for economic, technical and military assistance in 1980, with the agreement on the safeguard of the island's neutrality; (iii) the deployment of a naval force in the Gulf of Aqaba in 1982, in the framework of the MFO (Multinational Force and Observers); (iv) the participation of an Army contingent in the MNF

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Another, similar exercise "Mistral 95" will be held in France this year. Atlantic News, n. 2673, 25 November 1994, p. 3.

(Multi-National Force) in Lebanon in 1982-1984; (v) the participation of minehunters in an international mine-clearing operation in the Suez canal in 1984; (vi) the deployment of a naval task force in the Persian Gulf in 1987 to keep the Strait of Hormuz open to international shipping and to protect Italian tankers; (vii) the participation of a helicopter detachment in the UNTAG (United Nations Transition Assistance Group) in Namibia in 1989-90; (viii) the participation of TORNADO fighter-bombers in the coalition war against Iraq, and of an Army contingent in the operation "PROVIDE COMFORT" for the assistance of Kurd population in Northern Iraq in 1991; (ix) the organization and the conduct of the operation "PELLICANO" for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Albanian population in 1991-93; (x) the participation in the U.N. operations "RESTORE HOPE" and "CONTINUE HOPE" in Somalia in 1992-1993; (xi) the participation in the U.N. mission in Mozambique in 1993, and (xii) in the operations in support of the withdrawal from Somalia of the last U.N. troops in 1995.

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.<sup>26</sup> 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 now completed 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 acquisition of HARRIER VTOL aircraft for the "GARIBALDI" through-deck cruiser (which might be joined in the future by another sister ship), and procurement of ANIMOSO class destroyers, MINERVA class corvettes, and LERICI class minehunters has enhanced the Italian Navy's capacity in in-area and out-of-area operations.

Italy provides the following forces to NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC): the FOLGORE Parachute Brigade to the Multinational Division (South), an armoured brigade (the ARIETE), and a Mechanized Division, composed by the GARIBALDI and LEGNAGO brigades. Moreover, as previously said, Italy participates in the on-call air and sea force, and in the on-call ground force earmarked for WEU assignment.

The modernization trend shows the intention to increase Italian armed forces' ability to fight a naval and air war in the whole Mediterranean area<sup>27</sup> and the effort to strengthen their power

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<sup>26</sup>. The land component of the FIR is composed of six battalions: two motorized, one mechanized, 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.

<sup>27</sup>. In 1994, the Navy created its first amphibious warfare-dedicated helicopter unit. The unit, called Nucleo Elicotteristico per la Lotta Anfibia (NLA) has been established under the reorganization of the Italian amphibious forces. See *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 16 July 1994, p. 5, and 15 October 1994, p. 44.

projection capability.<sup>28</sup>

Nothing in the present political situation would support the assumption that Italy's foreign and security policy will change in the near future. But the potential ambition of the Italian policy was, and still is, limited: by the fragmentation and instability of the Italian political system; by the inward looking of all political parties, fully concentrated on their struggle for power; by the limited capacity of the Italian armed forces to act autonomously even in the Mediterranean region; by the lukewarm attitude of the Italian parties and public opinion towards external military roles and intervention, in particular if the risk of casualties is very high.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, the almost exclusive concentration on internal problems gives little space to long-term security and defence policy and planning -- a lack of a clear reference framework which the military explicitly criticize.<sup>30</sup> Finally, defence expenditures have been cut to a level the military consider of pure survival, thus jeopardizing modernization plans. On the other hand, the Italian Parliament has yet to approve the third version of the so-called "new defence model" which foresees a drastic restructuring of the Italian military instrument.

Obviously, Italy has a special interest in the stability of the Mediterranean area and is aware both of its particular vulnerability and the logistic relevance of its territory.<sup>31</sup> And it recognizes that it needs to be integrated in a collective security and defence system, in which the United States will continue to participate. In this context, the American military presence in the Mediterranean is considered essential for Italian and European security.

## 5. Concluding considerations

Let me conclude with a series of considerations.

Instability in the Southern Region has been a permanent feature of its strategic landscape. In fact, two thirds of NATO-relevant regional conflicts occurring after 1956 have been in this region.<sup>32</sup>

It is likely that future Mediterranean crises will occur in a South-South more than in a North-South dimension. In other words, political and social instability in the countries of North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans -- possibly resulting in the coming to power of radical

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<sup>28</sup>. A second rifle company has been recently added to the operational group of the SAN MARCO battalion, the Navy's amphibious unit. In the near future, the battalion is expected to reach the regiment size. Jane's Defence Weekly, 18 June 1994, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup>. There has been, however, a significant change with respect to the attitudes which characterized the early international missions of the Italian armed forces, when the decision to participate was made only after heated parliamentary debates. In the case of the UNPROFOR I, Italy imposed its participation in front of a lukewarm U.N. response and an explicit American opposition.

<sup>30</sup>. See the press interview of the Chairmain of the Joint Chief of Staff of the Italian armed forces, Adm. Guido Venturoni, on La Repubblica, 9 February 1995.

<sup>31</sup>. This was clearly demonstrated during the Gulf crisis and war against Iraq, in the enforcement of the U.N. resolutions in the Adriatic Sea and in Bosnia and by the establishment of a Forward Logistic Site (FLS) at the Italian Naval Air Base in Grottaglie (Sicily).

<sup>32</sup>. Mark Stenhouse and Bruce George, "NATO and Mediterranean Security: the New Central Region, London Defence Studies, 22, 1994, p. 56.

forces with a strong anti-Western bias -- and bilateral conflicts over ethnic rivalries and political, religious or territorial disputes are the main crisis scenarios the EU/WEU and NATO will be confronted with.

This does not exclude the risk of spillover from NATO's area of interest into NATO's area of responsibility, providing a clear linkage between crisis management (and peacekeeping or peace-enforcing operations) and collective defence. And this means that while political and economic instruments are useful and should be utilized in preventing and eventually managing the types of scenarios previously outlined, the ultimate defensive role of NATO's integrated military instrument should not be forgotten. Thus, strong military forces should be maintained and their rapidity of intervention, flexibility of employment through appropriate C3 arrangements, and possession of technologically advanced systems should be improved.

Other threats and risks such as international terrorism and mass migration, which are characteristic features of the Mediterranean security picture, are not bound to be deterred or deeply affected by powerful military postures. They can be better addressed by concerted political and economic policies and by close intelligence cooperation. However, even for these contingencies the role of the armed forces, particularly naval and special forces, could be very significant.

A special case is the threat of proliferation of WMD. In the January 1994 Brussels Summit, NATO officially expressed its counter-proliferation policy. However, this policy should be complemented by a more explicit enunciation of NATO's readiness to use force to respond to developments which would threaten its security. And it should be complemented by a strong push toward the realization of an ATBM system for the protection of the territories of NATO's Southern allies.

A few considerations on arms control in the Mediterranean. It can be argued that bilateral arms control agreements would be unlikely until there will be a more stable security environment, and that regional arrangements would be unfeasible without an institutional framework. However, it can also be argued that it would be possible to take the first step by promoting a wide set of confidence building measures (CBMs).

In terms of CBMs applied to the Mediterranean strategic environment, very little has to be invented. All the issues about possible measures, control techniques, systems for verification, etc. have been fully addressed in the recent past in the framework of the arms control process in Central Europe and similar solutions could be also applied to the Mediterranean, with minor modifications. The same is true for arms control measures applicable to naval forces. In this field, there are plenty of naval CBMs which could be derived from the agreements reached in the past by the United States and the Soviet Union, agreements specifically aimed at preventing incidents at sea.

The point is in which framework CBMs and eventually arms control in the Mediterranean should be inserted and advanced. NATO or WEU or the Five-plus-Five organization, at least initially for the Western Mediterranean? I think that, in the first phase, the Western organizations should stay on the sideline, expressing their willingness to provide assistance and expertise, and only in the second phase, when an agreement is close or has already been reached, decide whether and how to provide supervision, verification and guarantees.



For the time being, the eventual extension of NATO's Partnership for Peace to the Southern Mediterranean appears very difficult and very unlikely, particularly in terms of positive responses from the countries concerned. The WEU has stated its willingness to further, and expand to other countries, the dialogue already initiated with the Maghreb nations. Though its final goal is yet unclear, this may be interpreted as an indication that the WEU intends to assume a special security role in the Mediterranean within the European Union's CFSP. This would be in line with the conclusion<sup>33</sup> that "stability and equilibrium in the Mediterranean region are a responsibility of the European Union as a whole" -- and thus of the WEU as its military arm.

In this framework, the need for close coordination between the WEU and NATO is evident, and clear are the risks of overlapping and duplication. Europe possesses those political and, above all, economic means which are considered determinant for an effective crisis management, while NATO, apart its political means, has the full range of those military capabilities which may be eventually required.

This should lead to a sort of what I would like to define as "concertation of labour" between NATO and the EU/WEU. Both organizations should be ready to assume the responsibility for the management of those Mediterranean crises which are relevant for European security. In accordance with the crisis situation, and the tools which are better suited to face it, and through a coordinated decision making process, EU/WEU or NATO should take the lead. If the EU/WEU leads and if military actions are required, WEU could eventually use NATO collective assets and capabilities within the CJTF framework. If NATO leads it is expected that the WEU assets, which are not already earmarked for NATO, would eventually strengthen NATO capabilities. However, considering the types of crises which could be anticipated in the Mediterranean area the probability of an earlier involvement of the EU/WEU appears higher. In any case, NATO should retain its main responsibility for collective defence against all military threats and assume the leading role in counter-proliferation and regional arms control.

In the Mediterranean the political and military role of France is fundamental as much as its attitude on the links between NATO and the WEU, and towards NATO. During the Cold War, France considered the Mediterranean an area in which it was necessary to closely cooperate with NATO, though staying outside its integrated military structure. Today, French attitude towards NATO has not lost its basic ambivalence. French combat aircraft and combat ships are presently flying over Bosnia and operating in the Adriatic under NATO operational control, and French forces continue to participate in NATO's exercises in the Mediterranean. But France does not appear ready to reconsider its position in the Alliance and instead seems to point to the strengthening of WEU operational capabilities.

In military terms, the solution to the security contradictions of the Southern Flank might be found in making the Mediterranean the region in which to concentrate the efforts to further develop the WEU as a means to strengthen the European pillar of NATO.

In this context, let me put on the table a very provocative plan to be executed in at least two phases and over a medium term period.

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<sup>33</sup>. Reached by the CFSP Security Working Group of the EU and cited in the final document of the WEU Council in November 1994 dealing with a common European defence policy. Europe Document, No. 1911, cit., p. 5.

In the first phase, AFSOUTH's subordinate Headquarters (such as FIVEATAF and COMNAVSOUTH) restructure in a way to be able to operate as NATO and WEU Headquarters and their commanders assume triple-hat (NATO, WEU and national) responsibilities and functions. STANAVFORMED (the NATO standing naval force in the Mediterranean) is strengthened by integrating the units earmarked for the planned Franco-Italian-Spanish naval force and exercises and operates both as a NATO and WEU force in accordance with the situation.

In the second phase, the command and control of the Allied Forces in the Southern Flank is rotationally assumed by a European Admiral (who will wear a NATO and a WEU hat), flanked by an American Admiral (who will maintain his NATO and national hat). STRIKEFORSOUTH continues to be an American force earmarked for NATO assignment.

I realize that this plan to be viable has to satisfy at least three difficult conditions: France rejoining NATO in the Southern Flank, Turkey being accepted as a full member of the WEU, and the United States agreeing to the changes. And I know that this is just a general scheme and more details should be worked out, particularly in C3 arrangements, in such a way that: (i) the United States is not and does not feel marginalized, and (ii) an American military presence, which is fundamental for effectively performing NATO missions, remains in the Southern Flank.

But this restructuring and re-orientation of NATO is perhaps the way to address and face the range of ethnic and national disputes, and the multifaceted risks, which may erupt in the Mediterranean region.

In fact, this solution:

(i) would establish, at least in the Southern Flank, a deeper security and defence integration of NATO and WEU to be seen in the perspective of the now discussed New Trans-Atlantic Pact;<sup>34</sup>

(ii) would facilitate Euro-Atlantic crisis management by concentrating in NATO Headquarters NATO and WEU functions;

(iii) would facilitate the organization and functioning of WEU in times of crisis, and the performance of its peacekeeping and peace-enforcing role;

(iv) would prevent the costly and unnecessary duplication of a European integrated military structure and favor the smooth passage from a WEU to a NATO directed operation -- and eventually from peacekeeping to collective defence.

(v) would allow a better use of the capabilities and assets presently available and to dedicate the limited European defence resources to modernization;

(vi) would ease the implementation of the CJTF concept.

(vii) would fit into the present NATO<sup>35</sup> and WEU trends towards an expanded dialogue and cooperation with Southern Mediterranean countries;

(viii) would help the development of European security and defence identity within the transatlantic context.

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<sup>34</sup>. Joseph Fitchett, Western Europe Proposes New Trans-Atlantic Pact, International Herald Tribune, 7 February 1995.

<sup>35</sup>. The question of what should NATO do is under discussion in the Alliance ever since the informal meeting of NATO's Defence Ministers in Seville on September 1994. After the January 1995 NATO Council, the issue is officially on NATO's agenda.

A final remark. Only NATO gives Europe the transatlantic links that insure the maintenance of U.S. political and military contribution to its security and defence. This is particularly true in the Southern Flank. In fact, while it continues to be the "soft underbelly" of NATO, because of the political instability, economic crisis and military weakness of its Southern members, the Flank has evolved into a true frontier region for European security -- as the Central Region was during the Cold War. With one notable difference, however: while the Central Region of the old days was confronted with a clear military threat, today's Southern Flank is confronted with multiple risks which are difficult to address in purely military terms, and faces a rapidly changing environment whose repercussions on European security are hard to assess. For the foreseeable future, NATO and the EU/WEU are both necessary and complementary in the Mediterranean. It would be unfortunate if Europe in pursuing its goal of a security and defence identity would end up by undermining NATO.