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THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NEW NATO THE EUROPEAN VISION: POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES

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THE EUROPEAN VISION: POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES

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The new strategic concept (NSC), approved by the Atlantic Alliance at the occasion of its 50th anniversary, emphasizes threats and risks put to NATO's broad security by a set of non conventional factors and the will of the Alliance to intervene to counter such factors in its peripheral and adjoining areas.

The Mediterranean and Middle Eastern areas are obviously concerned by this new NATO agenda. In these two areas, security is dealt with today essentially by two policies: the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), with its bilateral and multilateral tracks, and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). If the Gulf is included, a third policy must be taken into consideration, i.e. the U.S. military presence in the Gulf area. What could be the implications of the NSC on these policies, in particular the MEPP and EMP? In fact, because of their olistic approach these policies are strongly related to non-conventional security factors and thus more concerned by the NSC than the military presence in the Gulf.

For the time being, the NSC is nothing more than a declaratory policy obviously predicated on NATO traditional deterrence and containment concepts. Whether substantive policies deriving from the NSC will evolve according to NATO traditional strategic thinking or otherwise is something which remains to be seen. In fact, the debate inside the Alliance about the implementation of the NSC towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East is just opening and will have to address a number of well-known differences between Americans and Europeans. NATO unilateral intervention against Serbia cannot pre-empt the result of this debate, which concerns issues as important as the identification of Western policy responses in tune with concrete requirements and situations in the areas concerned; the role of other institutions with respect to NATO; and that of the United Nations.

The report envisaged by a set of European Institutes aims at providing the European vision with respect to this evolution. This paper outlines the part of the report which will deal with political and security issues affecting Western relations with the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In terms of NSC, it refers to the set of challenges set out in points 22-24 of the document approved in Washington D.C. These challenges are more specifically analyzed by individual papers distributed to participants separately. Which are in the European vision or perceptions the political and security issues characterizing relations across the Mediterranean? Which policy response do they require and which institutions are equipped to deal with them at the best?

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While heavily involved in the disputes and conflicts pertaining to the south-eastern areas of the European continent (Turkey and the Southern Balkans), the Western countries are not directly involved in those concerning the areas south and east of the Mediterranean Sea. Still, conflicts and tensions on the other side of the Mediterranean have an impact on their broad security for a number of reasons:

(1) The presence in the region of political players and ideologies, be they inspired by religion or nationalism, with an exclusive agenda with respect to the West. This attitude to exclusion is rooted in history, from the crusades to colonialism and the implantation of the Israeli state. Furthermore, this concrete experience of intrusion combines with a culture strongly predicated on the need of authenticity. Whether because of history, modernism or globalism, the West is perceived by many Arabs as part of the web of factors that give way to their problems. This broad anti-Western attitude makes those who want to cooperate with the West, like governments, liberal intellectuals and firms, to walk on a tight rope. It fights and tends to limit Western access and influence as well;

(2) Independently of anti-Western attitudes, the great instability of the area, generated by varying kind of conflicts and tensions, is in itself a limitation to access, which may affect investments and natural gas supplies as well as tourism;

(3) Tensions and conflicts in the area have considerable spill-over effects, particularly with respect to Europe, like immigration and displacement of people for political reasons as well as political terrorism; furthermore, they link with more general trends like internationally organized crime and trafficking;

(4) The high level of conflict, mistrust and tensions in the area brings about a high level of armaments both conventional and unconventional. Beside other factors, the poor economic performance of the region is more and more favoring the acquisition of WMD. Presently, WMD have less an offensive than a deterrent or interdiction purpose, particularly towards the West. In perspective, however, they may put threats to European countries. Today, they complicate attempts at solving or managing conflicts in the areas south of the Mediterranean Sea. Proliferation is not a form of direct North-South confrontation. It may be regarded as a spillover-like factor.

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In sum, in its security relations with the countries south and east of the Mediterranean Sea, the West is basically facing two challenges: (a) enjoying an easier and less intrusive access to the area, which is also meaning that it has to inspire to and enjoy from Arabs more confidence; (b) seeking to tackle and manage the different kinds of spill-over effects coming from southern areas' instabilities.

As far the first point -i.e. access- is concerned, the most important political challenge is how Western countries can strengthen players open to cooperation without discrediting, delegitimizing or destalizing them domestically. Such domestic reinforcement, according to Western opinion, should essentially rely on governments' ability to establish more pluralistic and democratic polities. In the objective conditions of the region, however, new democratic political regimes can be established only over time. They need a gradual process in which external cooperation has to play a significant role. With respect to cooperation in the political and security field, if the present regimes on the other side of the Mediterranean and in the Middle East have to be helped to walk on their tight rope and initiate change without being destabilized internally, the Atlantic agenda for cooperation should contemplate the following:

(a) First and foremost, the bilateral tracks of the MEPP must be completed and achieve fair political results in the eyes of all the countries involved. Western security cooperation makes sense from the point of view of both Arabs and Israelis if it is first of all in tune with their national security agendas. If it does and achieves positive results, further steps on the road to international and North-South regional security cooperation would become

feasible by governments which would be basically strengthened by the success of the MEPP (whichever opposition is left to peaceful relations and tolerance among the countries concerned). The completion of the bilateral tracks in the MEPP would reactivate the ACRS. As soon as the substance of a regional cooperative security framework would be established in the Middle East, attempts at creating some North-South security cooperative framework would be made possible, whether within the EMP or with NATO (or both, if in the New NATO, at a point in time, the European Defense and Security Identity/Initiative were consolidated);

(b) Second, North-South cooperation relating to security should be based on rules and goals that would reassure non-Western countries about their equal status in the frame of cooperation. Because of the asymmetries in military power and the global dimension of the Alliance, forms of security cooperation may be more feasible and implementable than a full cooperative security scheme (like the one seemingly envisaged by the first chapter of the Barcelona Declaration). Whichever the form of cooperation, the experience made within the current North-South Mediterranean security "dialogues" (with the EU in the EMP, in NATO and WEU), in particular with the issue of the Euroforces, has made clear that what the Arabs expect from these "dialogues" is the possibility to share decisions actually geared to increase their security (rather to be made just aware that there are Western forces ready to intervene in crises). The way to deal with this difficult question is the institution of a strong multidimensional political cooperation, essentially devoted to preventive purposes, at first in a middle-long and, then maybe, in a short term perspective. In this sense, the way indicated by the EMP's institutions is the right one (the Ministers, the Senior Officials, the Euro-Med Committee, etc.);

(c) Third, whichever would be the framework of North-South Mediterranean security cooperation or cooperative security, it must explicitly and unequivocally rule out the enforcement of collective security, leaving its implementation to the UN Security Council.

This scenario is the condition for the implementation of any regional policy of non-proliferation (see the paper on "Proliferation").

In this scenario, however, which Western institution would be the ideal partner of the countries across the Mediterranean Sea cannot be given for granted. From what it has just been pointed out in the above, it is clear that military cooperation should be based on a strong political cooperation, and that this cooperation would compel partners to make linkages between military and non-military issues, thus giving cooperation a comprehensive and olistic character. The EU-initiated EMP possesses such political and olistic characters, but it doesn't include the USA. NATO includes the USA and other important non-European partners, like Canada, but, even in its new version, it is neither a political nor an olistic institution. NATO could work as the trans-Atlantic political institution in the simple world of the Cold War. In the more complicated world of today, a trans-Atlantic body for political cooperation is just lacking.

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If the conditions of political access will improve, access in a broader sense will be eased, too. The Arab countries would become more available to multilateral economic cooperation, an attitude that is strongly conditioned today by existing conflict and other political factors. The improvement of geopolitical conditions would also make the "disruption of the flow of vital resources" and subsequent economic shocks less likely (see the paper on "Energy risks"). However, while the attainment of North-South security

cooperation and the improvement of reciprocal political access will take time, spill-over effects are at work and deserve prompter policy responses.

These issues are contemplated by the third chapter of the Barcelona Declaration. The NSC lists more or less the same issues as challenges NATO has to meet. There are two questions here: (a) whether and to what extent the various spill-over effects have to be considered as challenges or risks or even threats, i.e. something the Western countries must be protected from; (b) whether NATO, a powerful military alliance, is the right organiztion to deal with them. These points are considered in detail by the papers on "Terrorism, drugs and organized crime" and "Migration and refugees".

There is no doubt that immigration is not a threat nor a risk. It is a social and political challenge which affects national security in a very broad sense: unemployment or poverty are as much a risk or a threat to social cohesion and national security as immigration. There were in recent past attempts at dealing with immigration with military mean, like the use of the Navy by Italy in the Otranto Canal. This policy brought about the sinking of a boat of immigrants and their deaths and was consequently dismissed.

In the NSC, NATO limits the notion of this challenge the to "uncontrolled movement of large numbers of people, particularly as a consequence of armed conflict". This is clearly the description of the destabilizing Kosovar inflow in the FYROM, Montenegro and Albania as a consequence of Serb ethnic cleansing. Though in the NSC statement this event is pointed out in the context of a resounding rhetoric of threats to the West, in fact it belongs to the realm of the Petersberg-like task, in which a situation of extreme social disorder and danger may require the use of military instruments, similar to what happens in case of natural disasters, instead of or beside civilian agents. Whether NATO or WEU, both would be able to intervene to manage this kind of crisis. Maybe an inter-regional organization (i.e., one including southern Mediterranean countries) would suffice and generate better political results than NATO or WEU interventions.

It is worth recalling, however, that in the Mediterranean framework the WEU's Petersberg tasks are regarded with suspicion and substantially rejected by southern partners. The attempt at introducing in the EMP context a CBM providing the use of military means to help in case of natural or man-made disasters has been approved but it hardly looks implementable and, if implemented, it will leave the country concerned with a maximum of freedom in assembling the team, thus eluding the multilateral character of the cooperation. We are back, here, to the arguments put forward in previous sections with respect to chances and ways of security cooperation in the North-South Mediterranean framework.

Organized crime and terrorism may require the use of military instruments but only on occasions and for very specific purposes. For example, the Italian government sent in the Army in areas affected by organized crime to enhance its own control of the territory and, at the same time, make it more difficult to criminal organizations. The essential job, however, was left to the police. The use of low-intensity violence and secrecy requires responses and instruments which do not correspond to the use of military force: instruments to be used are rather social control, the police and the intelligence (civilian or military).

There is no doubt that organized crime and terrorism are linked to armed conflict (and immigration) but they don't overlap with conflicts they relate to. While terrorism may have the same political sources of conflicts, organized crime and drug trafficking take certainly advantage of conflicts but they remain a challenge deriving from social factors. The fight against international crime, drug trafficking and terrorism relies on stronger

inter-governmental cooperation rather than security cooperation in the military field. The most serious problem with international cooperation against terrorism is that political evaluations relating to terrorism are different. In the Mediterranean, many Islamists are considered political refugees by the European governments and chief-terrorists by Southern Mediterranean governments.

NATO and the WEU own some intelligence resources (but for substance have to rely on national services). Still, they are not the right instruments to fight international crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, though in specific, case-by-case occasions they may. Besides this functional argument, the social nature of these issues as well as the strong governmental political cooperation they require suggest to include them in an olistic scheme for broad security cooperation more similar to the EMP than NATO or the WEU.

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In conclusion, as it is well known since the NATO Rome Declaration, the kind of challenges coming from the countries south and east of the Mediterranean are strongly tied to political, cultural and social drivers. For these reasons they cannot be identified as threats and dealt with by military policies and instruments. Military instruments can be used, but to non-military purposes. However, even the cooperative use of military instruments, for peace-keeping or enforcing, may prove politically unfeasible in this area. In order to improve Western access to and manage trends deriving from disorder and instability on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, strategies of deterrence or containment are not helpful. The policy response which may fit with the Mediterranean environment is enhanced political cooperation in an olistic institutional scheme opening gradually the way to security cooperation.