New profiles in Mediterranean geostrategy
Les nouveaux contours de la géostratégie méditerranéenne

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Abstract: The Mediterranean, cradle of civilisations, cultures and religions has always also been a sea of conflicts and tensions. The populations that flank it, all of different religious faith, political beliefs and life styles have never managed to accept mutual dialogue leading to peaceful collaboration. Tensions reflecting differences between distant great powers are often added to those existent between the countries along the Mediterranean shores. History presents this area as one of the most critical in the world and its sea as one of the most sensitive and dangerous. The political-ideological confrontation between West and East is now being replaced by the no less disturbing economic-social confrontation between North and South.

After the recent historical turn-around a new geostrategic scenario whose confines are not yet clear emerges for the Mediterranean. Now the sea becomes more European than American, but is no less armed and patrolled than in the past. A highly powerful naval force sails its waters and nearly a hundred bases serve its needs. This impressive military instrument, assembled to support the political aims of the coastal states and therefore the expression of their naval power, has effects of geographical interest on the sea's surface and on the coastal settlements that surround it.

Keywords: Mediterranean Sea - Geostrategy - Naval power

...the sea has never been friendly to man.
At most it has been the accomplice of human restlessness...

Joseph CONRAD (The Mirror of the Sea)

Today, as in the past, the sea in which the gods were born, is the mirror of history of the men who live on its shores, reflecting their conquests and conflicts.

I - GEOSTRATEGY: OLD AND NEW SCENARIOS

The Mediterranean as the meeting point of three continents – already in geological tension – enjoys its by now classic image of the cradle of civilisation, culture and religions, the cross-roads of people and trade, the threshold of ethnically different races with different religions, political ideals and economic resources. But the Mediterranean both in its narrow and also in its wider sense if one includes the sea of the Middle and Near East also has, unfortunately, earned the name of the sea of the conflicts, and the battlefields overflowing from the lands that surround it.
Recent history is no less rich in these than that of the distant past. This century has seen some fifty wars, revolutions, regional conflicts and local recourse to arms. Nobody can count how many there have been in past two millennia.

In practice, up to the second world war, the Mediterranean was a European Sea, dominated by the military and economic strength of the old western thalassocracies especially the British and French. Later, rapid changes in the balance of power began to take place. In the 60's, Soviet naval vessels made their first appearance in the Eastern Mediterranean (the first Suez Crisis) and in this time around the Mediterranean saw the process of decolonization. France left its ancient colonies and protectorates in North Africa and with them the two important naval bases of Mers-el-Kébir and Bizerta which, together with Toulon on the northern shore, gave control over all the Western Mediterranean. Britain left Malta and Cyprus (but kept the bases of Akrotiri and Dhekelia on the latter island) which were key points for controlling Central and Eastern Mediterranean, but kept Gibraltar — claimed by Spain — the only access to the Atlantic routes (Vigarié, 1989).

Very soon the US VI Fleet arrived to patrol the spaces left untended in the Mediterranean. It was purpose-structured to operate in this semi-enclosed sea. Thus the Mediterranean became an American Sea, (or some say an American Lake) especially from when the United States gained notable prestige in the area with the success of their Near East policy (Camp David agreement, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, re-opened the Suez canal and its return to the western orbit). From then on the military instrument of the "containment policy" against Soviet ideological expansion in the Mediterranean was entrusted to some forty surface vessels (and a certain number of nuclear submarines) flying the American flag, normally supported by a wide corollary of naval and air bases spread, above all along the northern European and Asian coasts.

The Soviet Union, for its part, followed a programme of development of its own fleet, from the second half of the 60's faced the US VI Fleet with forty large vessels, the V Sovmedron (Fifth Soviet Naval Squadron for the Mediterranean), taken in rotation from the powerful Black Sea Fleet of over 120 units. They began to patrol the Mediterranean to find and check on the NATO force and seek support from the few friendly states (Syria, Libya) or, more often, riding at anchor in international waters near to particular strategic points, NATO bases or the gates of Gibraltar and Suez. Thus the two Superpowers have progressively taken over from the medium powers, while behind them there arose another leading actor in search of stardom, Islam.

Now, in the 90's, after the recent great historical happenings, there is a new geostrategic profile whose contours are not yet well defined but susceptible to a view of the Mediterranean as more European than American; a sea therefore no less armed and patrolled than in the past; a sea perhaps more dangerous than before.

The Old Continent has been the theatre of unexpected and unpredictable events that have changed human history. Communism has crumbled in the Soviet Union and its zones of influence. The Warsaw Pact has dissolved. Soviet-American bi-polarity and the rigid contra-position of blocks are no more. The Soviet Union has been dismembered into independent republics formally adhering to the Confederation of Independent States (CSI). In the West the red peril has disappeared with withdrawal of the large armed forces drawn up in Central Europe. There has been the reunification of Germany and of Europe after the fall of Berlin wall and the Iron Curtain. But the principle of the unmodifiable frontiers fixed, first at Yalta and then at Helsinki, has also vanished causing the re-emergence, almost everywhere, of long repressed claims, conflicts between different ethnic and national groups. Only rarely have these achieved peaceful settlements (the division of Czechoslovakia); more frequently dramatic conflicts have arisen, as in Yugoslavia, leaving a trail of cruel struggles between different nationalities.

A little further a field, in the Near East, the interminable Cyprus crisis and the Palestine situation show, for the first time, some hopes of possible solutions. With the intervention of UN, Greek-Turkish dialogues have opened, and US intervention has brought about the signing of the first peace agreements between Israel and its Palestine neighbours. However, other ethnic-religious turbulences remain and have become highly dangerous on the wider Middle East horizon, such as that between Kurds against Iraq and Turkey or that between Sunniti and Skia on the delicate zone of the southern cordon between Iran and Iraq. The unpredictable behaviour of certain Arab leaders in search of personal prestige and aided by extremist religious movements, is still a disturbing feature.

In Albania the fall of the Communist regime has exposed the critical economic situation of the country and opened its gates to a flood of clandestine immigrants to Italy. In Algeria there has
been the political isolation of Islamic fundamentalism but this has provoked dangerous xenophobic tension and terrorism.

The new Russia with the CSI no longer has many important regions of the ex-empire (Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaigian, Estonia, Lettonia, Lithuania) and (what is more) is involved in difficult problems of internal management which will probably, and for some time, keep it from being a leading actor on the world stage.

The only Great Power left is the United States but also here there are internal economic problems which call for economies in the most expensive budget items such as the financing of large armed forces abroad (some 40 bases have already been reduced or closed). It is expected that, in the future, the US will adopt a way of managing international politics which does not require its guiding hand but with more attention to the new emerging areas of the world such as the Pacific in which China seeks a pre- eminent role. There is therefore some decrease in the weight and intensity of US presence in Europe (and thus in the Mediterranean) which European Powers have now to make up for with greater political and military commitment.

The crumbling of counter positions between blocks, maintained by the threat of total nuclear war, has removed the protective mantle which these blocks provided to many more exposed and strategically weak European and non-European states. Meantime, they have gained more responsible positions in international relations together with greater autonomy and dynamism in foreign affairs.

Geopolitics - understood as geography applied to politics - with its specialist component geostrategy, have thus returned after some 50 years of eclipse as a useful tool to understand the behaviour of states and the new, difficult political-military balance (Jean, 1992). The world political picture has new protagonists. Among these, there is the European Union (EU) because – once the Treaty of Maastricht is in force and economic-monetary unification is established – it could (and should) take a leading role if it also manages to have unified management of foreign affairs and military policy without perhaps giving up, for the latter, its integration with the US through NATO.

In truth, for now, the inevitable widening of the European Union seems to be slowing down rather than accelerating the pursuit of the objectives of political and institutional integration between member states. Moreover, the entry of the EFTA countries into EU and the shifting of the centre of gravity with reunified Germany encourage the assumption that faced by the inevitable coexistence of a double track of European interest, towards the East and towards the South, the first track will be preferred to the second. This perspective could mean that the rich European countries, while creating a wide network of economic relations with the Orient, will reduce their interests in the opposite shore of the Mediterranean and thus in the Third World. The countries of the Old Continent must therefore continue to watch the Mediterranean with interest and a sense of responsibility. As members of EU, they will be able to operate economic and political plans to promote cooperation, development and perhaps peaceful coexistence. As members of NATO, they will have to accentuate their presence in and control of this critical sea.

As it is easy to understand, after the events set out here, the geostrategic Mediterranean scene has recently undergone a proportional change. Since the ships of the Voenno Morskoj Flot lowered the red flag and ran up the traditional blue St Andrew's cross on a white field of the Tsarist navy and withdrew from the Russian bases in the Baltic and the Arctic (apart from those claimed by the Ukraine which remain in the Black Sea), the Mediterranean has returned to being a Western Lake and looks like staying that way for a long time.

Although there is less risk of conflict between the two superpowers, the West should not drop its guard too much given all the present and latent crisis situations. The future, then seems as worrying as the present.

The accelerated demographic evolution of the Mediterranean population must be taken into account. This will tend to accentuate the economic gulf between North and South and between the standards of living. In this context, the precise analysis of the Plan Bleu and the scenarios it hypotheses offer alarming prospects (Grenon and Batisse, 1989). These derive from the expected surge of demographic pressure on the non-European shores. The total population of the coastal states has risen from 210 million in 1950 to 360 million and should reach 400 million by the next century and be around half a billion by 2025. On this basis, along the 46 000 km of coastal strip, more than 200 million inhabitants, as against few more than 130 million a decade ago. An important qualitative variation will correspond to the quantitative growth within 30 years,
45% of the young will live on the southern shore and 25% on the northern; the active population will increase by 5 million in the North and 135 million in the South.

Also the urban growth rate will have accelerated rhythms along the African and Asian shores while they should stabilize in the North. In total, by 2025, more than three quarters of coastal population will live in towns (160 million out of 200 million): twice the present total (Antoine, 1993; Ekistics, 1986).

It is easy to imagine the serious problems that will arise in the coming years for working population, in the evolution of the standard of living, in the spread of xenophobia and racism, in the feeding of the hungry (there are already food surpluses in the North and shortages in the South), and energy supply (in future the southern countries, today producers and exporters of energy sources, could become dependent on importation like their northern neighbours).

There is also a serious diminution of essential natural resources which impedes the balanced development of the southern shore. Water supplies (for domestic, industrial and agricultural use) are already critical in almost all the countries of the south and east coasts and the prospect is worrying as it is on the northern coasts, where population pressure grows with the high number of seasonal tourists. Agricultural space is limited by man (urban sprawl) and by nature (erosion, desertification, salinity). The coastal forest covering has always been intensely exploited and by now is widely impoverished by frequent fires.

There is no lack of problems for coastal zones. These represent 17% of the neighbouring countries’ areas and house 40% of their total populations, plus an annual arrival of 40-50 million tourists, a total which may double by the end of the century (Kliot, 1989). More than a third of the coasts have already been acquired for urban settlements, industry, ports and tourism.

In this context the marine resources become precious, and in the Mediterranean they are as much sought after as they are scarce. Above all, the coastal states have sought to acquire as much marine space as possible. Some problems arise between states concerning the delimitation of maritime boundaries according to the principles of the Conventions on the Law of the Sea of 1958 and 1982.

Apart from some still continuing objections about territorial waters (for example, the Sirte Gulf has been declared an historic bay by Libya but is not recognised as such by Western Powers) the present discussions are about the subdivision of the continental shelf between neighbouring countries or on opposite shores. The classic principle of the equidistant line between opposite shores is fairly easy to apply, but in some cases it could require important modifications to be decided between the countries involved. This arises when, for example, there is a coastal territory controlled by a state and claimed by another. A typical case is of the opposite shores of the Straits of Gibraltar, where Spain claims the British possession of Gibraltar but at the same time defends its own African possessions of Ceuta and Melilla, which in turn are claimed by Morocco (Kliot, 1989).

Other modifications are required by the presence of islands on the high seas and even near the coasts of other countries. Italy found this problem with Tunisia for the Pelagic Islands and solved it by political agreements. In the same way, Italy has agreed appropriate deviations of the median line with Albania and Yugoslavia, to take account of islands in the high sea.

A much more complex though similar problem arose at the end of the 60’s concerning the sharing of the Aegean Continental shelf. It is a dispute, yet to be resolved whose protagonists are the neighbouring countries of Greece and Turkey who—while both NATO members—unfortunately, until a short time ago have had a long story of struggle and strife (Prescott, 1985; Yerasimos, 1984; Ridolfi, 1993).

Up to now, some ten maritime limits have been defined out of the forty predicted. When difficulties arise, the International Court of Justice at The Hague may act as arbiter as it did in the case of a stretch of the boundaries between Libya and Tunisia. However everything becomes more complicated, and both solutions are inapplicable, when countries who have problems about living together have to agree about drawing lines. This happens with Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries and with Cyprus which is divided into two parts respectively controlled by Turkish Cypriots and the Greeks, and also with Greece and Turkey over the subdivision of the Aegean.

Subdivision of the sea means subdivision and appropriation of its resources. Among these there are the precious fish stocks which however are much impoverished and in some cases almost
exhausted because of increased pollution and the overuse of the limited continental shelf. This has been made possible by modern techniques for finding shoals and illegal fishing methods (sea bed drag nets, explosives). Some areas such the Gulfs of Trieste and Athens, where pollution is high due to the human and industrial concentrations on the coast and where there is little exchange of water because of the coastal morphology, the critical threshold of the marine ecosystem has long since been passed.

However the serious problem of pollution has come to the fore in the sensitivity of populations and coastal states. The community of Mediterranean countries has, for some time, been called upon to act to safeguard the environment which in many parts is already compromised. The increasing worries about this common good have given rise to new and encouraging cooperation between Mediterranean countries. The principles of sustainable development have been accepted by the political classes and passed on to public opinion.

Since 1975, the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) has been an efficacious instrument in this fight. However it has not always become operative in all countries. It is always possible however that some confrontation between opposite shores of the Mediterranean could be driven by the problem of protecting the quality of the marine environment. These could involve the southern states with quite healthy coastal waters, and the northern and eastern countries with coastal waters often degraded by excessive land discharges.

As can be seen, around this rather crowded Mediterranean, there are still, as in the past, reasons for tension and preoccupation, enough to justify the name a sensitive sea. This is likely to continue. As we learn from recent history, apart from serious problems of internal political instability or exacerbated nationalism, many other factors have become important in relationships between peoples.

The Mediterranean offers a complete and disturbing range of all these. The problems are certainly not limited to this sea but they count more here because Mediterranean resources are very limited, the environment is fragile and margins of freedom are restricted (Antoine, 1993, p. 260).

II - NAVAL POWER: NEW EMERGING FACTORS

For all countries, including the great economic powers, there has been a great increase, especially in the last half century, of maritime dependence or the necessity for considerable quantities of indispensable goods to be supplied by ship. In this way, for many countries the sea lanes have become an essential factor of progress and indeed for survival in some cases.

As a result not only the maritime powers but also other countries whose borders are washed by the sea, if they are able to do so, pay the closest possible attention to safeguarding their access, both to their coastal waters and also to essential ocean routes. To this end, every state has political, diplomatic, economic and, in case of necessity, military instruments (Vigarié, 1989).

The Mediterranean even though it is a comparatively small semi-enclosed sea, is an essential gateway for almost all its coastal states and these therefore have always tried to have an adequate defence system. Here, as been said, there have always been many and diverse ways of lighting crisis fuses and it cannot be excluded that the future will hold others which cannot be forecast today. So it is accepted that the Mediterranean has become an armed and patrolled sea, because it has always been dangerous (Vigarié, 1989; Ridolfi, 1988).

It is calculated that the surface of this sea (including the Black Sea) is at present patrolled by a fleet of over 2 000 warships of different types and dimensions (including some hundred submarines, 150 medium sized surface ships and 500 light fast patrol vessels) with at least 2 million tons displacement and crews of about 150 000 (Istituto Idrografico della Marina, 1993). It can said that this fleet constitutes one third of the whole world fleet. It can also be said that there is one naval vessel for every merchant ship that plies the Mediterranean sea daily.

After the recent withdrawal of the Soviet ships, there are also fewer American vessels in the Mediterranean or, to be precise, they have been moved from the west-central basin to the east and to the nearby waters of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Recently, the Balkan crisis has recalled a large part of them into the Adriatic. New flags have replaced the old (Ukraine, Croatia, Slovenia...) or fly together with them. At the same time, demonstrating the political-strategic sensitivity of the countries of the Union of Eastern Europe (UEO) towards the situation of constant risk in the wider Mediterranean area, a naval force for urgent tasks has been assembled.
For the maritime countries their naval fleets are an essential instrument for national security and international policy. The modern concept of national security not only concerns the nation's territory, but also its coasts and its seas. The international policy of every country depends on the credibility of its capacity to intervene to protect its vital interests which are, in practical terms, the access lanes for goods necessary for survival.

This need, important for the coastal states but also for inland countries, introduces the concept of sea power which means «the capacity to express, on the sea and beyond, sovereignty, security, guarantees and care for one's political, strategic and economic interests wherever they are to be found» (Giorgiervini, 1992). A priority of sea power is naval power, represented by the navy's operational capacity both in peace and in war.

In operation, naval power acquires different forms and dimensions; that of power projection, of sea control and of sea denial. Each country adopts a defence module based on the first, or on the second or on the third form of naval presence. This obviously depends on the objectives and the commitments of its international policies and real economic possibilities to maintain and develop a more or less complex military force. In the Mediterranean, apart from a few cases (Cyprus, Malta, Lebanon), all maritime states have, to some extent, means to stop or affront the access of foreign ships into their waters.

From the geographical point of view, it can be observed that the control and interdiction functions generally take place in national seas, but can involve whole Mediterranean sectors (western central, eastern basins) and their access. The medium Mediterranean powers (Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Libya) give these priority tasks to their fleets. The availability of a certain number of medium-large surface vessels is a necessary condition for power projection in seas far from territorial waters. The consistency of the fleets of the great powers (e.g. France in the Mediterranean) and of the superpowers can allow autonomous power projection actions. For "international policing" to face serious emergencies in distant seas (such as those of UNO in recent years) multinational forces can be formed including elements from smaller navies.

The naval power of the coastal states is understood as the domination of marine spaces which tend to be more and more extensive. There are now extending beyond their territorial waters as far as the edge of the continental platform. They are also paying particular attention to their access to the Mediterranean gateways (Fig. 1).

III - NAVAL FORCES: IMPACTS ON THE SEA AND ON THE COASTS

The powerful military forces assembled to support the political aims of the coastal states has interesting geographical effects on the sea's surface and its surrounding coasts. The normal operative activity of naval forces in peacetime (essentially crew training and ship maintenance) decides what are the military uses of the sea. These include some ten main categories among which are, naval dock and repair yards, submarine bases, submarine, antishubmarine, battle units exercise areas, minefields, nuclear test areas, etc. All, except the last, are present in the Mediterranean (Ridolfi, 1988). The first two concern fixed land structures while the others involve different forms of use of waters and sea bottom.

States which arm fleets thus need coastal structures (arsenals, ports, shipyards, fuel and ammunition deposits, facilities of every type) to dock and for ordinary and exceptional maintenance and for the technical and logistic assistance for the crews. The distribution of naval bases along the Mediterranean coasts is thus an important effect of the naval power assembled by coastal states. The size and number of each state's bases varies according to the size and typology of its navy, the kinds of ships and the length and morphology of the coast. The choice of sites is thus of equal importance. Ideal conditions offer internal waters well protected from the sea and especially from enemy incursions. Most naval bases and in particular those with arsenals, exploit the most favourable geomorphology of the coast: Toulon, La Spezia, Taranto, Piraeus, Sevastopol...

Also, most naval bases coincide with historic ports which almost always are important coastal cities and so naval structures are forced to live cheek by jowl with commercial facilities. Both then can find limits to their expansion and functionality by the presence, behind them, of a dense urban fabric. Modern naval bases such as those specialised for types of vessels are sited in areas outside urban settlements in order to preserve security and secrecy (for example the new Libyan base of Ras-Bilal or the nuclear strike submarine base SSN of La Maddalena in north-east Sardinia).
Fig. 1 - The Mediterranean: an armed sea
Naval Power expressed in terms of number and class of vessel and their strategic role.
The figures in brackets give the total ton of the relative merchant fleet (in thousands of tons).

Fig. 2 - The Mediterranean: a patrolled sea
The Mediterranean boasts some eighty naval bases (Fig. 2). Twenty of them belong to NATO members (half of these in Italy), ten to maritime states of ex-Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro) and Albania, three to Israel and more than forty to Arab countries among which Egypt and Libya have eight each. The Sixth Fleet has access to eleven bases and numerous landing places and smaller anchorages. Great Britain, as has been said, has Gibraltar and two bases in Cyprus.

The Mediterranean is thus a strictly patrolled sea all along its coasts and inland. The nearest bases are rarely more than a hundred kilometres apart and the most distant are no more than 500-600 km.

As it is easy to understand, naval bases have environmental impacts on the coastal spaces they occupy and on the nearby waters. Both are usually forbidden to the public and reserved for military use. Preservation and maintenance are generally meticulous. Bases and arsenals usually employ hundreds of people to serve the ships and the technical structures. A satisfactory living environment must be offered to all these people. So civilian personnel is necessary for these. Thus work and economic resources are provided for the local populations.

The impact of naval forces on the sea is much more marked. All countries have defined zones reserved for naval surface and undersea vessels exercises, both inside and outside their territorial waters and generally near the bases. During naval manoeuvres these areas are strictly out-of-bounds for navigation and other surface and sea-bed activities, thus creating forbidden sea zones.

There are 300 zones in the Mediterranean for naval and air arm activities: 11 are in the Marmara Sea, 53 in the Black Sea, 5 in the Azov, while the rest are in the three Mediterranean basins. Many of them occupy spaces of few tens of square kilometres, others some hundreds. Altogether it can be calculated that naval exercise areas cover a thirtieth of the Mediterranean, three fifths of the Marmara Sea and a third of the Black Sea and the Azov Sea (Ridolfi, 1988).

The correlations between military and other sea uses are generally conflictual and also risky. The limits caused by different forms of military activities which invade the marine space (naval surface vessels exercise areas), the water column (submarine exercise) and the seabed (minefields), impede the operating freedom of many users (trade, fishing, bathing, skin-diving etc.). It must be said however that the naval uses unless they cause explosions and are carried out within the accepted norms, are much less damaging to the marine environment than other common civil uses which may severely harm the marine ecosystems and health. Obviously the presence of a great number of men and ships on the sea produces liquid and solid waste. Most of this is absorbed by the water column as a biodegradable substances but the quantity of pollutant substances which deliberately or accidentally are discharged every day by 2 000 naval vessels with over 150 000 crew members is by no means insignificant.

The end of tension between East and West has certainly reduced the stress which has lasted a long time in the Mediterranean military "theatre". However, there seem to be no visible signs that there will be any marked reduction of these powerful war machines floating around these waters. To the question as to whether the European coastal states will experience "continuities or breaks", unfortunately, for the Mediterranean there are no signs of breaks because tensions and dangers continue to interweave menacingly on the far side of the sea and every coastal state does what it can to maintain or strengthen its naval defence force.

One break, or better, one big change however has taken place. The principal coordinate of confrontation between opposite shores has changed from the political-ideological confrontation between East and West based on the military power as it was in the long years of the Cold War, to an economic-social confrontation based on the equal division of resources between North and South. What is needed is a maturing of the willingness and the political capacity of the international community to favour a constructive dialogue along this coordinate. The dialogue will have to encourage solidarity and integration between two different worlds. The principles of sustainable development matured as a scientific plan could become a useful political instrument to this end.

Centuries ago the Mediterranean lost its role as the centre of the World. It however continues to be a primary point of contact for peoples having great growth aspirations. As in the past, the weight of history subtends its geostrategic and geopolitical scenarios, but it is comforting to quote Friedrich Nietzsche: « The Mediterranean is the most human of seas ».
Notes

1 - The 17 coastal Mediterranean states (now 20 plus EU, with the addition of Albania, Croazia, Slovenia, Bosnia Erzogivina), encouraged by the Stockholm World Conference on Human Environment (1972), drew up in 1975 in Barcelona the first international convention hinged on the protection of the environment (Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution). They accepted the rules proposed by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and have launched MAP within which the MEDPOL programme, essentially directed to the measures against sea pollution, has been developed. In 1985, the Declaration of Genoa was signed which up-dates and defined common action for the protection of the Mediterranean stipulating a series of objectives to be achieved in the following ten years. This expired in 1995 and a second Barcelona convention (Convention on the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean) has laid the base for further sustainable development in accordance with the principles set out by the 1992 Rio Conference (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) in which sustainable development is conceived as a system with three objectives: 1 - the integrity of the ecosystem; 2 - the efficacy of the economy; 3 - social equity. These are united in the Agenda 21 for the Mediterranean (Vallega, 1993). On the concrete financial level, the World Bank and the European Investment Bank (BEI) drew up a Programme pour l'Environnement dans la Méditerranée (PEM) for the economic and technical support for the coastal states in their initiatives for the environment (Antoine, 1993).

2 - The Soviet V Squadron, before its withdrawal, while being close to the Black Sea basis, was equally dependent on external bases - from the strategic point of view - as the United States, in practice, controlled all the accesses to the Mediterranean through allied countries (Marocco, Spain, Turkey, Egypt). It could count on the Syrian ports Tartus and Lattakia and in Libya, Tripoli, Benghazi and Ras Bilal and a fuel supply point at La Valletta. Normally the Soviet ships were stationed in international waters east of Gibraltar (Alboran Sea), in the Sicilian Strait, in the Aegean (near Kikira), west of Crete and near the Suez Canal (Sollum). It also had fixed anchorages in various seas: off Almeria in Spain, north east of Sardinia, east of Crete and north east of Cyprus (Ridolfi, 1988).

3 - The exercise areas interest the Spanish coastal waters in front of Balearic Islands and those between Almeria and Barcelona; French waters between Marseille and Nice and those south-east and north-west of Corsica; Italian waters around the Gulf of La Spezia, the east coast of Sicily, the Gulf of Taranto and southern Sardinia; the Greek waters of Gulf of Egina and of the north eastern coast of Crete; the water of the Marmara and the Black Seas, those to the north-east of Cyprus; finally the Ukraine waters of the south coast of the Crimea. Along the African and Asian coasts, these zones are less numerous and less extended. These also are combined with the main bases like those of Oran, Algeri, Biserta, Tunis, Alexandria. Albania, Syria and Israel have no officially defined exercise areas but their territorial waters are occasionally used.

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