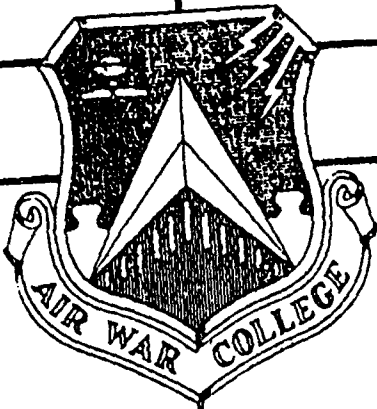


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RESEARCH REPORT

THE MEDITERRANEAN CHALLENGE--A STRATEGIC
CONCEPT FOR THE YEAR 2000

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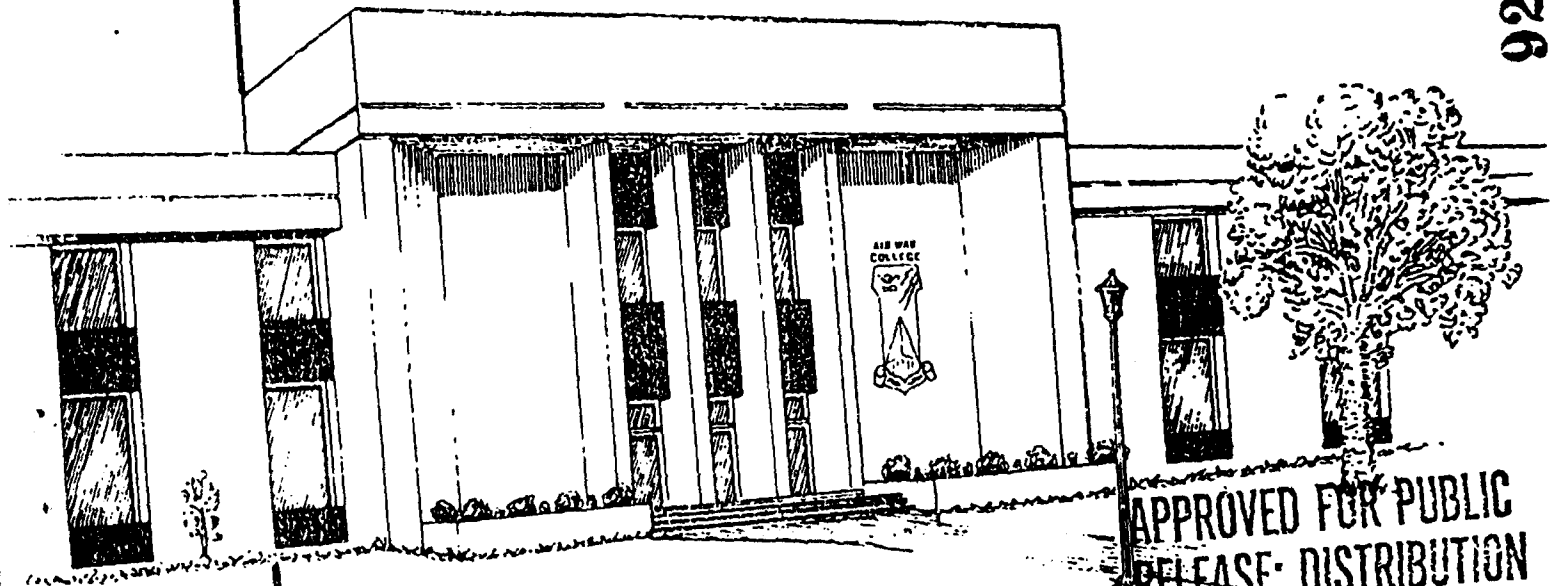


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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
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THE MEDITERRANEAN CHALLENGE: A STRATEGIC
CONCEPT FOR THE YEAR 2000

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Dr. David E. Albright

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

May 1991

The dramatic political and economic changes that are sweeping Europe are highlighting the end of the cold war era and ushering in a new era of uncertain international relationships for the United States and all other world actors. The east-west tension that has driven our containment policy and formed the basis of the bipolar world for the last 45 years is being displaced by multipolar relations and an emerging world order which, while unknown, will certainly be vastly different from that which we have known since the end of World War II. And, as the only remaining true superpower, the United States must assume a dominant leadership role and adapt to this dramatically changing environment.

Our national focus has been on Europe since the end of World War II. But, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent response by the United States led coalition have defined significant new aspects of future global interaction. Specifically, tensions and instability will still occur. But, as opposed to the cold war era, potential conflicts will not be defined as a competition between superpowers manipulating proxy actors. Rather, as was the case with the recent events in the Persian Gulf, the world community will take action in a much more pragmatic way. Said another way, the cold war was a broadly conceived struggle that gave primacy to geopolitics and military preparedness. But, as we close out the 20th century, ideological and military issues are likely to give way to economic factors which will dominate the world stage, while other factors like the

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environment, terrorism, drugs, and demographics will grow in importance (10:2).

Further, as Desert Shield/Desert Storm so vividly demonstrated, the United States is "bound to lead" (17) in an emerging world order which will see economic issues largely defining vital national interests. And, if one considers Europe, Japan, and the United States to be the focal points of economic power in the 21st century (14-4), then the United States' vital interests will be largely dictated by its interactions with Europe and Japan. As such, the Mediterranean basin will become an area of "vital" importance to the United States because of its strategic location, economic potential and tremendous potential for political and social instability.

This paper will examine the nature of the new world order and consider the United States' interests and objectives in that new order. Further, the Mediterranean region will be examined in terms of its relationship to vital US interest and external and internal factors that effect the region. Finally, this paper will outline, in general terms, a United States' strategic concept for the year 2000 that will most effectively employ our political, economic, and military instruments of power in what will surely be a most dynamic and challenging 21st century.

NEW WORLD ORDER

American interests and objectives in the 1990s have been

broadly defined and can be summarized as follows (15:2,3):

1) The survival of the US as a free and independent nation, with its fundamental values intact and its institutions and people secure.

2) A healthy and growing US economy to ensure opportunity for individual prosperity and a resource base for national endeavors at home and abroad.

3) A stable and secure world, fostering political freedom, human rights, and democratic institutions.

4) Healthy, cooperative, and politically vigorous relations with allies and friendly nations.

These are enduring values that were valid during the cold war era and will be equally valid during the post cold war era. However, what will be dramatically different will be the far more complex, multipolar world environment that displaces the relatively simple, bipolar arrangement that dominated world events since the end of World War II. Simply stated, the superpower confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated virtually every aspect of political interaction and defined issues in terms of militarily containing the Soviet Union. But, there is a growing consensus that "the new force in the world is neither arms nor political ideology; it is economic power" (10:6). Clearly, it was the lack of economic power and capability that finally brought about the demise of world communism. Appropriately then, it will be economic power that will dominate in the future. But, as a world leader and superpower it will be

necessary for the US to recognize the multipolar arrangements that will develop and replace the old bipolar arrangement.

Politically, the world will truly become multipolar with individual nation-states motivated by forces of nationalism and searches for ethnic identity replacing the bipolar political alignment of the communist vs non-communist world. In this environment, the US must interact with individual nations on an equitable basis fostering democratic governments, human rights and environmental development. The US cannot, indeed should not, dominate in this arena but rather, should provide the model of democratic institutions and social development for other nations to emulate and adapt based on their own individual circumstances.

In the military environment, the US will be the dominant power. Not in the sense of bringing forces to bear, although this was credibly and decisively demonstrated during Desert Storm. But having demonstrated our capability in the Persian Gulf, it is imperative that the US maintain a leadership role by using the military aspect of national power to control arms proliferation, especially the limitation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and to discourage the use of force as a means to settle regional conflicts.

Clearly the Soviet Union will remain an extremely capable military power, indeed, the only nation on earth capable of destroying the US by virtue of its nuclear capability. In this sense, the US must maintain a modernized and credible nuclear capability. In the conventional arena, the Soviet Union will

remain a threat, but more of a regional threat given the reduction of east-west tensions. As such, the US will be able to reduce its forward deployed conventional forces which will have a positive impact on the US' economic position.

On the economic front, there will probably be three dominant centers of power which will interact and seek equilibrium over the next several decades. The US will, of course, continue to be one of the three dominant economic powers. And, given the real prospect of reduced defense spending, the US will be afforded the time and opportunity to work budgetary issues and correct trade and deficit imbalances that have developed over the cold war years. It is imperative for the US to put its "fiscal house in order" if it is to provide credible leadership in this important element of national power. Japan and Europe, the other two dominant centers, which have been enjoying substantial economic growth since the end of World War II, will most likely have their growth slowed by the reduction in east-west tensions and associated global developments. In effect, the reduced Soviet threat will serve as an equalizer to the relative decline of the US with respect to Japan and Europe as discussed below.

Since the end of World War II, Japan has focused on economic development rather than military development. Limitations on military expenditures imposed by the US at the conclusion of the war certainly dictated this focus to a large extent. But, from a security perspective, the Japanese were able to limit defense spending to roughly 1% of their GNP by virtue of the US' forward

deployment of forces which has provided the security shield against Soviet expansion as well as providing a counter to Chinese and Korean influence in the Pacific region. The reduction in US-Soviet tension will allow the US to reduce the level of forward deployed forces worldwide. But, for the Japanese, the Soviets will still pose a substantial security threat in the Pacific region that will require an increased level of Japanese military capability to counter that threat.

Similarly, the US' worldwide deployment of forces has served to open and protect markets that the Japanese have been able to exploit. But, as the US reduces the level of forward deployed forces and with the growing worldwide investment by the Japanese in banks, insurance companies, and manufacturing enterprises, the Japanese will be forced to expand their ability to protect their interests around the globe (25:6). In effect, global interests and homefront security will require the Japanese to substantially expand the portion of their GNP that is devoted to defense.

In Europe, there are similar dynamics that suggest political and economic change that will tend to favor a balancing of power vis a vis the US. For example, the emerging EC 92 holds the potential of a closed European market with tremendous economic clout. But, with the addition of the underdeveloped and economically backward east European countries to the EC 92 equation, a substantial amount of aid and investment will be required to encourage the development of free markets in these previously communist economies. While the US must play an active

role in supporting the development of eastern Europe, it must keep its expenditures down while encouraging the west European countries (Britain, France, Germany) to assume a greater share of this financial burden.

In addition, along with economic problems, the east European countries will bring a whole range of ethnic and political issues to the fore that will likely increase tension and generate instability. This, coupled with continued Soviet military capability, will require the US to maintain a military presence to serve as a stabilizing force in the region. Both the US nuclear umbrella as well as a continued but substantially reduced conventional capability will be required to ensure European stability into the 21st century.

The challenge, then, for the US in both Europe and the Pacific is one of balance between a number of key factors: we must reduce forward deployed forces with concomitant savings applied to domestic economic concerns while still maintaining a credible military capability that ensures stability in Europe and the Pacific and discourages a future, renewed Soviet Union from any hegemonic adventures; as we reduce overseas defense expenditures, we must encourage our principal economic competitors in Europe and the Pacific to assume the fiscal responsibility for a larger portion of their own security and defense; and, while we must continue to aid and encourage the development of market economies in east Europe and in other third world regions, we must ensure that, just as with defense expenditures, our principal

competitors pay a proportionate and fair share. In short, the economic arena will be characterized by a new equilibrium largely driven by changing security concerns and associated military expenditures and by a far greater degree of interdependence among the three dominant centers. Economic health and stability, in turn, will largely dictate political and social development in numerous areas of the world. It is little wonder, therefore, that President Bush has reaffirmed the Carter Doctrine and the vital importance of the Persian Gulf to the Pacific, European, and, ultimately, US economies. Similarly, in his comments to the Air University on 13 April 1991, President Bush declared the United States' commitment to Europe because "a secure Europe is vital to American interests and vital to world peace".

THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

It is in this environment of a changing world order and vital, interdependent economic interests of the major world powers that the Mediterranean region takes on increased importance. By virtue of its strategic location, the Mediterranean basin serves as a vital interface between the middle eastern oil fields and Europe. Further, the diverse nature of the region and multiple sources of conflict and instability discussed below, will define a new north-south threat axis for Europe which will displace, in large part, the east-west threat axis which has dominated Europe since the end of World War II (22:7).

The United States has historically viewed the Mediterranean region as three subareas. First, and of greatest importance, the NATO allies of southern Europe have been directly involved in the east-west standoff by virtue of their alliance commitments. Next, the eastern Mediterranean littoral states forming part of the Middle East, have been tormented by eternal conflicts and continue to be an area of explosive tension. And finally, there are the relatively friendly, but less vital in an east-west context, Maghreb states of north Africa including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

However, some political scientists believe that in this environment of dramatic change and emerging new world order, "it is time for the American policy community to begin thinking about the Mediterranean as a region in its own right, as a geographic unit that links countries with common concerns, with reasons to compete over resources, and with incentives to find cooperative solutions to an ever-expanding list of local problems" (11:50). The question, then, is should the United States try to influence the region as a whole or should it interact with the countries in the area on an individual or subregional basis? The answer, given the many issues at play and the multipolar world order that is evolving, may be both.

The Mediterranean region, as a whole, is a diverse area which does not lend itself to a large regional organization. In fact, in a 1966 essay on regional organizations, Leonard Binder of the University of Chicago suggested that regional organizations

evolved in large part as an anti-colonial response in the post war period of colonial power decline (3:15-17). Further, he argued that there were three fundamental motives which drove nations to regional groupings: nationalism, or more properly national identity apart and secure from the colonial power; economic prosperity; and power potential. A cursory look at the Mediterranean region will show a mix of emerging third world nations and former colonies primarily on the southern littoral and, to the north, the former colonial powers. Further, the economic, political, social, and military differences in the region are such that it is probably unreasonable for the US to expect to be able to deal with the region as a homogeneous grouping, and the countries within the region are likely to resent being treated in such a fashion.

That is not to say that subregional organizations will not develop and their development should not be encouraged by the United States. In a 1990 study of subregional organizations, William T. Tow argued that subregional security organizations would continue to develop to enhance collective self reliance and defense and would seek to utilize limited diplomatic, economic, and military resources in the subregion in an effort to help eliminate vulnerabilities, protect sovereignty, and strengthen the international competitiveness of their members (24:127). From the outside powers' perspective, the subregional organizations would provide identifiable focal points for the projection of interests during times of regional crisis without intimidating small,

individual countries.

Throughout the Arab world, there are a number of subregional groupings that have developed in response to a particular shared concern. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), formed in 1981, includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman in a defense alliance that performed well in the recent Persian Gulf crisis.

In 1989 in north Africa, five heads of state recently set aside long-standing differences in a pragmatic move to enhance this subregion's economic future. Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, and Libya banded together to form the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in an economic bloc modeled along the lines of the European Community, largely in recognition of the need to join forces in order to successfully interact with EC 92 by reducing the Maghreb's dependency on Europe and developing greater internal trade (20:9). In principle, the AMU has a good chance of success because by the year 2000, the Maghreb will have an internal market of some 90 million people (18:48).

The point here, of course, is that subregional groupings formed on the basis of a common issue or concern and kept relatively small will probably have a chance of achieving their limited goals or objectives. Or, as one author put it, "if you are going to form an alliance, ally yourself with the man who shares your beliefs, not just the chap who lives next door (22:7).

Before leaving this area of subregional group utility, it is important to point out the emergence of an overarching

organization modeled after Europe's Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The proposed Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) is an idea originally introduced by Italy's foreign minister, Gianni DeMichelis, in the fall of 1990 and is now gaining support from other Mediterranean countries. The CSCM, in its proponents intentions, is designed to ease tensions in a vast area stretching from Iran to Mauritania recognizing the growing economic and demographic separation between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, and the potential conflict between Islam and the west that is also developing in the region (23:57). As an action oriented, problem solving organization there is probably little hope for success. But as a confidence and trust building organization that gets all geographic actors around the same table to "confer", there will probably be substantial utility.

The European example provides a useful parallel. The CSCE, a 34 member body including the United States and Canada, is a useful overarching assembly of countries with different subsets of common interests but with geographic commonality. The subregional groupings include fewer countries and are more capable of making decisions and taking action: NATO as a defense alliance includes 16 countries; EC 92 as an economic alliance currently includes 12 countries (2:17). Similarly, in the Mediterranean, the CSCM could serve as an overarching geographical assembly designed to confer on broad regional issues and get all actors around the same table, while specific action and solutions would be left to the smaller

subregional groupings like the AMU.

The objective then for the United States, would be to encourage the development of appropriate regional and subregional groupings in the Mediterranean and to recognize their utility and potential effectiveness in providing stability and valuable communications nodes in the area without having to rely exclusively on bilateral, one on one arrangements.

Before delving further into regional and subregional approaches that may be feasible and beneficial to the region and help shape a US strategic concept for the region by the year 2000, it is important to review both external and internal factors and some objective data that will influence the various countries in the region and shape the issues they and the United States will deal with in the future.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

With the reduced Soviet threat in Europe and corresponding CFE reductions, east-west tensions in central Europe will certainly be reduced. But, the Soviets are not likely to reduce their Mediterranean fleet and as forces are withdrawn from the former eastern European satellites to south and southwest USSR, the Soviet threat to the northern littoral countries, especially Turkey, will remain formidable.

Similarly, as the old communist regimes of eastern Europe come apart and the Soviet Union relaxes its grip on ethnic groups

within the Soviet Union, there is a substantial threat of increased ethnic unrest in the Balkans and in the southern Soviet republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This ethnic unrest could easily spread to minority groups in Turkey, Italy, and Greece thereby presenting a serious destabilizing force for the northern Mediterranean countries. The potential for this kind of ethnic unrest has been vividly demonstrated by recent activities in the Baltic republics as well as the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf war which is now posing a substantial problem for the Turks.

The reunification of Germany and development of eastern European democracies will likely lead to a much stronger united Europe with an inward focus and with Germany as the dominant country. This could have a substantial impact on Mediterranean countries who look to Europe for employment and market opportunities. Accordingly, this European dynamic has stimulated formation of subregional organizations in an effort to enhance political, and more importantly, economic competitiveness. In this scenario, Italy with its relatively healthy economy could be a key player, and the emerging Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) will be provided additional incentives to develop their economic capabilities. In this same arena, the implementation of the EC 92 initiatives will provide unique and potentially divisive impacts to the Mediterranean countries. Spain, Italy, and Greece are already part of EC 92 and Turkey is currently excluded but seeking admission. The Maghreb countries

will have access to the EC but, given their relatively weak economies, may have difficulty competing except as a subregional group.

INTERNAL FACTORS

Just as there are several external factors that will influence events in the Mediterranean region, there are also a number of internal factors that will dictate actions on the part of the United States and the countries within the region.

First, historical and current social, political, and economic factors have combined to essentially divide the Mediterranean into north and south blocs. The north, comprised of the former colonial powers and the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, tends to identify with Europe and is relatively strong economically when compared to the southern littoral states. This area, the Maghreb, has united largely in response to influence from the imperial powers and brings together common social and economic issues. This north-south division is supported by differences in relative economic strength, population trends, and debt problems that will be addressed later. But, as such, this division represents a north-south interaction which the US must understand and cope with.

Politically, the entire region tends to view the United States as an imperial power. The northern littoral countries, with their closer association with Europe, are less likely to

yield to US power. Conversely, the southern littoral countries, with the exception of Libya, recognizing the importance of US assistance in the area, are likely to be more responsive to US power. This distinction itself will tend to encourage the north-south division that is already present and therefore could serve as an impediment to a broader regional association.

Finally, all the countries of the region are being affected by growing pluralization and greater diversification of their political systems especially as they view the trends toward democracy in eastern Europe and now even modestly on the Arabian peninsula. While this provides for greater degrees of political freedom within the region, it also provides for greater levels of uncertainty for the US as it interacts in the region.

A significant subset of this phenomenon is the growing Islamic fundamentalist movement which will likely have a destabilizing effect on the region, especially in Turkey and in the Maghreb countries. In effect, this Islamic movement, often militant as in Iran, will raise security concerns for the predominantly Muslim countries that emanate from the east while the non-Muslim countries of the Mediterranean will perceive their security concerns as emanating from Europe and the north thereby further encouraging the north-south division in the region.

A clear example of this interaction between trends toward democratization and the potential conflict with Islamic fundamentalism is evident in Algeria where President Chadli Benjedid has promoted ambitious political reform following bloody

riots that spread through Algiers in October 1988. A new constitution legalizes opposition parties and ends the political monopoly enjoyed by the Front di Liberation National (FLN) since the Algerian revolution which evicted the French in 1962. Despite opposition, President Chadli is determined to push ahead. However, this sort of progress may be halted if the newly freed Islamic opposition is able to gain substantial power which could ultimately lead to the more conservative army faction rising up in opposition to further political reforms (5:23). In short, while increased pluralization and democratic reforms are trends the US will surely support, the potential for greater instability and conflict is high, especially in those areas where political freedom has never been a part of their culture.

OBJECTIVE COMPARISONS

In order to better understand regional dynamics and the potential for the development of subregional organizations, a comparative look at a number of objective factors will provide insight into areas of common ground as well as substantial differences that exist in the Mediterranean region. Rather than look at all the countries in the region, this paper will focus on three: Italy, as a representative of the southern European countries; Algeria, as a representative of the north African Maghreb nations; and Turkey, because of its "gateway" character bridging Europe and the Middle East.

COMPARATIVE DATA

<u>FACTOR</u>	<u>ITALY</u>	<u>TURKEY</u>	<u>ALGERIA</u>
GNP			
- AVG 86-88 (\$Bil)	765.2	68.6	63.6
- PER CAPITA (\$)	13,320	1,280	2,760
- ANNUAL INC (%)	2.0	5.4	4.1
POPULATION			
- TOTAL (Bil)	57.6	55.4	24.9
- ANNUAL INC (%)	0	2.2	3.2
TRADE DEF/SUR (\$Bil)	-.768	-1.8	+2.4
DEFENSE			
- ACTIVE MANPOWER (K)	390	651	138
- BUDGET (\$Bil)	16.8	2.5	.81
- % OF GNP	2.1	3.6	1.2
LITERACY (%)	93	80	80
UNEMPLOYMENT (%)	12.0	14.4	21.8
INFLATION (%)	6.6	36.4	14.0

A brief look at the table above highlights some key issues which will impede regional cooperation and will, in turn, foster subregional competition and friction, especially in the social/economic arena. While all of the economies appear relatively healthy and are enjoying reasonable rates of GNP growth, there are substantial differences in per capita income which tend to draw lines of haves versus have nots. Italy clearly enjoys per capita income on a par with European countries and even approaches that of the United States (\$19,780). By comparison, per capita incomes in Turkey and Algeria place these nations and

the other countries of the Maghreb in the third world arena.

Population and population growth are substantial problems in the region. Compared to Italy's 0% growth rate, Turkey and Algeria are still experiencing sizable rates of population growth. In fact, given the average female fertility rate in north Africa of six children per female compared to two per female in the western industrialized countries, the population is expected to double in 25 years (19:26). Another significant aspect of this population explosion is its youth. For example, when compared to a European average of 34% of the 1990 population in the 0-24 year old group, and the United States with 36%, Turkey sits at 55%, Tunisia 58%, Morocco 61%, and Algeria at 65% (22:6). When one considers that the majority of the Muslim countries have populations growing far faster than their GNFs and their relative youth, it is easy to forecast a grim picture of rising political and social expectations that will be frustrated by economies that simply can't keep up.

These factors, combined with relatively low literacy rates and high unemployment will place substantial economic and political strains on the region and will most likely dictate significant migration patterns out of the region. However, given population densities and unemployment to the north, and the pending EC 92 changes for Europe, the traditional migration to the north will be constrained and will very likely cause increased north-south friction.

And finally, trade deficits and inflation rates, especially

high in Turkey, tend to parallel world wide trends and present a degree of instability in the region that can be exacerbated by adverse developments in the world economy. As it stands now, domestic spending on defense, as a function of GNP, does not appear to have a negative influence on overall economic health. By the same token, even with a lessening of east-west tensions, there will probably not be any "dividend" benefit to the Mediterranean countries and there may even be, as discussed above for Turkey, increased defense requirements.

US STRATEGIC CONCEPT FOR THE YEAR 2000

From this very cursory look at the Mediterranean region, it is clear that it is an area of diverse groups and trends and an area that possesses a litany of potential sources of instability and conflict. Further, when one recognizes its strategic location and potential impact on US vital interests, it is evident the US must develop a greater focus on the area and a pragmatic involvement that optimizes all our elements of national power.

Militarily, the US must maintain a dominant influence in the region. Given the varied nature of threats, both internal and external, the US should rely on bilateral defense relationships similar to those which have been successfully utilized in the Pacific region. However, the long standing relationship with the northern littoral countries through the NATO alliance should not be abandoned.

The US should continue to maintain forward deployed forces (albeit reduced in keeping with NATO reductions) in Italy, Turkey and in the Mediterranean with the USN 6th Fleet. This will serve as a continuing regional presence and as a counter force to what will surely be a continuing Soviet presence in the region. The US must also maintain a vigorous security assistance program as a means of achieving access to the region and in an effort to be the major player in controlling arms proliferation, especially in nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. As the principal arms purveyor in the region, the US can exploit other advantages which accrue to the seller: control and interoperability; economic gain; and productive interaction when one considers attendant training and maintenance requirements which should accompany arms sales. While sale and proliferation of arms have a negative connotation, it is clear from events in the Gulf and elsewhere that nations that so desire can and will procure arms. The US must be the dominant seller if it is to exert the maximum amount of control leverage.

Politically, the US must continue to encourage democratic reforms and serve as the role model for such key issues as human rights and environmental management. The US cannot, indeed should not, dictate developments in this arena, but rather should be able to influence the region in a broad, non-threatening way. To this end the broad membership of the CSCM seems to be a useful vehicle for getting all the regional actors around the table and involved in constructive dialogue and confidence building.

Economic issues are the key to progress and stability in the region. Accordingly, the US must encourage subregional groupings like the AMU that pull relatively weak individual economies together to form more effective economic blocs that can compete on the world economy. Healthy economies will pay great dividends in terms of political and social stability and will ultimately reduce the likelihood of military confrontation. Conversely, as one of the three dominant economic centers, if the US is not able to encourage substantial investment and the development of free market economies in this vital region, the potential instability could be devastating and rapidly disrupt the European and Pacific economies.

CONCLUSION

As we approach the turn of the century, it is clear that the relatively stable cold war stalemate that has dominated the world stage since the end of World War II, is being replaced by a dynamic, in many ways unpredictable, new world order. While the final outcome of this new world order is not yet known, there are some trends that are evident. First, the US, as the only remaining true superpower, must assume a leadership role and promote positive change and greater international cooperation. And, while Joseph Nye argues that by virtue of its superpower status the US is "bound to lead", the US must pursue its leadership role from a power base that is nowhere near as dominant

as that which the US enjoyed at the end of World War II. As such, the US must exercise all elements of its national power in close cooperation and harmony with other world leaders, including the Soviet Union.

Secondly, there is a growing consensus that the geopolitical, military strategies that dominated the cold war era are being displaced by economic concerns on the part of major powers as well as third world nations and a host of former second world communist countries. As such, it is imperative that the US gets its own economic house in order and encourages a new world wide economic equilibrium characterized by adjusted defense expenditures and subregional economic blocs that optimize economic power and competitiveness.

Indeed, it may be that the future role of NATO and the US presence in Europe may be to protect Europe's southern flank as we enter the 21st century, in the same way that NATO protected the eastern flank in the last half of the 20th century.

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