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Introduction

We are going to describe this morning the implications for Western security of the political, economic and social situation in North Africa. I think this is a very interesting issue, above all after the study that was carried out yesterday by Professor U. Steinbach about the Middle East.

North African countries live on a quasi-island, surrounded by the Mediterranean and Atlantic waters, and by the great sea of the Saharan desert. For the US this region is essentially a marginal appendage of the Middle East and a «voie d'accès» to the eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. From this point of view instability in North Africa would not affect the US directly. Nevertheless, the Gulf War served as a timely reminder of the existence of the Mediterranean, a region in crisis.

I want to define the challenges posed by the southern mediterranean area. The broad lines of this study are a description country by country and the security and factors of imbalance (in essence the «soft» security aspects as Professor Mortimer says).

Country by country description

Sudan

This is the biggest African country (2.5 million square km.) which lives a dramatic civil war between an islamist government and a resolutely secular and increasingly separatist Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA, in short) since nine years ago. Nevertheless the roots of this bloody conflict are in the beginning of this country as an independent State.

The people of the northern Sudan are of Nubian and Arab stock, Arabic-speaking and Moslem in religion. The peoples in the south (roughly south of latitude 11.^o N.) are of negroid stock, an pagan or Christianized in religion. After independence there was a revolt in the south which led to a long and bloody civil war, as various governments in Khartoum seemed determined to impose a unitary government on the south. Agreement was finally reached in March 1972 by which the three southern provinces —Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal— were made an autonomus region.

For years, Khartoum has been playing the old game of divide and rule. This started with former President Jaafar Nimeiri's redivision of the south in 1983, which overturned the provisions of the 1972 Addis Abeba agreement that concluded sixteen years of previous civil war. In 1983 as well the National Islamic Front (NIF) became a formal partner in General Nimeiri's dictatorial government which introduced Sharia (Islamic law) to Sudan. These actions restarted the fighting in the south. Since then the various Khartoum governments have stoked ethnic conflict by arming different competing tribal militias. Ironically, this policy has now made souther Sudan ungovernable for Khartoum as well as for the SPLA (there are old tribal animosities within the SPLA).

Khartoum is determined to spread its own intolerant brand of radical Islam throughout the south which it sees as the gateway to black Africa. Africa's largest country, Sudan has tremendous strategic importance. Besides joining black an North Africa, Sudan borders nine countries, and is a regional power in its own right. Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as conservative Arab regimes, are implacably opposed to Khartoum's radical Islamic stance, and both fear the rise of an Islamist power-base in Sudan.

The government insists that the Sudan is an Arabic Islamic nation to be governed by Islamic laws. This is utopia in a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious country which has become a nation of «displaced» and «refugees». Meanwhile thousands of people have died in ethnic conflict and the civil war shows no sign of abating.

Egypt

After a decade in power President Mubarak has begun to reap the strategic rent which Egypt has traditionally sought to earn from its stability, its pivotal location and its image as the moderate face of Arabism and Islam.

Within the Arab world, it has returned to a commanding position. A measure of Egypt's success was the naming of its two most senior diplomats, former

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Meguid, and Deputy Prime Minister, Boutros Boutros Ghali, to head the Arab League and the UN respectively.

Egypt gained more from the Gulf War than perhaps any other country. Before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Cairo's finances were in a very bad situation. The external debt was an unsustainable US\$ 50 billion—double the GNP. All the may 1990 Arab summit in Baghdad radical leaders led by Saddam appeared to have isolated moderate allies of the West such as Mubarak. Nevertheless, after the War all that changed. International creditors have granted the respite needed to make long-overdue economic reforms and in January 1992 the debt stood at a manageable \$27 bn.

Up to this point we have talked about the most positive aspects. But Egypt has 58 million of inhabitants and 1,2 mill. new citizens a year. There are several problems such as a mounting unemployment, a grossly inefficient state sector and the inflation is currently running at about 25 per cent. It suffered a massive trade deficit in 1991 and the debt relief is dependent on the continued support of the IMF for Egypt's reform programme (the 79 per cent of the Egypt's trade has been liberalised). It has recovered the tourism after the Gulf War although is currently suffering political problems (attacks from the Islamists in Assiout, Dairout and Cairo). The estimated cost of repairing damaged wreaked by the October 12th earthquake that devastated central Cairo is 1.5 bn. of Sterling pounds and the foreign assistance amounts to aproximately 200 mn.

For the time-being the Islamist attacks constitute the most important concern to the Egypt's authorities.

Libya

Although most of Libya's huge area consists in desert—less than 2 per cent of the land area is arable—this is the richest North African country. Its population is only about 4 mn. and this is the sole North African country which receives inmigrants. At least 1 mn. Egyptians already live in Libya, and Tripoli and Cairo have agreed that up to 2 mn. more can go to work on the farms to be irrigated by Libya's Great Man-made River project, which involves piping water from beneath to southern deserts for use along the coast.

Libya also hosts large Sudanese an Chadian communities. In 1985 the government used the «employment» weapon and expelled 30,000 Tunisians, leading to a break in diplomatic relations between the two countries. Subsequently, Moroccan workers were recruited to fill vacated posts.

The Gaddafi's revolutionary populism and the energy dependence of some

European countries on Libya and their strong economic interests in this country are positive for the stability of regime. Apart from the armed forces, the Revolutionary system —a web of Councils and Committees— and the tribal alliances (his own tribe, the Qadhadhfa), there are no other real centres of power, nor any charismatic figure capable of uniting opposition to Gaddafi. Libyan society is fragmented and the Libyan people appear politically apathetic. All the opposition groups are in the exile and they have no real national legitimacy.

After the 1987 «Gaddafistroika» and a very positive period of relations with the Western world Libya lives a new crisis because of UN sanctions since April 15th, 1992 (air and military embargo). The alleged involvement of Libya in the Lockerbie and the French UTA air disasters impelled the USA, Britain and France to sponsor a resolution by the UN Security Council demanding that Libya surrender the agents allegedly responsible for the two bombings. This is a very sensible question but in any case it would be unwise completely to isolate Gaddafi.

Tunisia

Its population of 7.6 to 8 mn. people sets in the fertile alluvial east coast from Bizerte to Sfax. Ben Ali's regime, which seemed to be a well-controlled model of change, saw in 1991 that the illegal Islamic group An-Nahda was about to prepare a plot so about one hundred Islamic military, many of them trained in the US, were arrested and one of the objectives was to murder the president.

Ben Ali has announced on December 27th 1992 free presidential and general elections in March 1994 including important changes in the electoral code. Tunisia is trying to negotiate a partnership with the EC leading eventually to a free trade zone such as Morocco is doing now.

Algeria

This is a huge country but since most of it is uninhabitable desert or arid mountains, nine-tenths of the population are concentrated in the northern coastal strip. This 1.100 km. strip along the coast is 100 km. to 200 km. wide and is fertile but hard to farm. In this fertile part of Algeria, people have become concentrated in the cities as a result of rural exodus. The four biggest cities —Algiers, Oran, Constantine and Annaba— already have an increasingly difficult housing problem.

Algeria started in 1988 a difficult transition from a republican socialist

single-party regime to a more open multi-party regime. Algeria was until 1988 seen as among the most stable African-Arab countries. During the first free elections the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF) has beaten the major National Liberation Front (NLF) party in June 1990. The Islamist leaders were put in jail in June 1991 and the groups became more radical. Later, the ISF was set to win the general elections in January 1992 before the elections were cancelled and the party outlawed since February 1992. Several armed Islamist groups went underground after ISF was dissolved and pseudo-guerrilla organisations like the Mouvement Islamique Arme (MIA) and the Tayeb El-Afghani have been accused of waging a war of terror since then. Civilians, soldiers and police officers have been amongst their victims.

The assassination of Algerian President Mohammad Boudiaf on June 29th 1992 represented a new phase in the downward spiral toward chaos. In July Ali Kafi took over the Presidency after the assassination. The regime has promised an all-out war against those campaigning for an Islamic state in Algeria. A new antiterrorism code has been introduced, with special courts set up to deal with «terrorist» offences. Two death penalties have been executed in two members of the Algerian Navy on January 11th 1993.

There is little prospect of the ISF being allowed back into the political arena in any form but no one would deny that the islamists still have a strong support in Algeria. There is frustration because of the political and social situation. Algeria had 1.2 mn. unemployed in 1991, or 21 per cent of the active population; this rate has increased by 8.6 per cent or 105.000 new unemployed, in relation to 1990.

There is also considerable scepticism at large about Islamist radicals being blamed for all the recent violence. The killing of Boudiaf, in particular, has prompted speculation about the role of the Algerian «Mafia», the suggestion being that Boudiaf's attacks on corruption and criminality upset too many powerful interests in Algeria.

The war against Islamists seems to be the top priority in the agenda of the government. At the same time the government is continuing with its programme of «cleansing» mosques and it is now the «sole propagator» of the Islamic religion. Government links economic revitalisation to stable security. It considers economic revival as being vital for the restoration of security. This events have not affected the guarantees the US, Japan and France are prepared to give for exim-type loans whose proceeds are earmarked for the revamping and extension of the country's existing gas liquefying capacity. Nearly \$1 bn. worth of loans to this effect were signed in November 1992. Meanwhile, external demand for Algerian gas has grown beyond Sonatrach's —the State's Company— current

ability to supply it. The price of oil is the country's main foreign currency earner. Spain, France and other Western countries will renew loans in 1993 as well.

According to the Government the democratic process will be allowed to resume when the time is right. As things stands at the moment, the High State Council, which Ali Kafi heads, is due to step down in December 1993. But there is no electoral timetable beyond that and it is feared that the political situation will further deteriorate.

Morocco

This country is still seen as an important ally in the southern Mediterranean and European governments and the EC would like to provide increased support. This is reflected in EC plans to make Morocco the first recipient of its new free-trade zone agreements. According to these supporters the kingdom is on a new liberal path, deserving maximum support from Europe to stem the tide of radical Islam in North Africa. Morocco has long aspired to become a full member of the EC.

Nevertheless the future of Morocco is a question mark for everybody. Morocco, which seems to be the most stable state in this region, is now at a standstill. There are several movements inside the Moroccan society that we must take into account: Riots between islamist and leftist students in the Universities (Fes, December 1992); a growing concern among the Moroccan immigration on the lack of liberties (the Democratic Movement of Moroccan Opositors was born in Madrid last January 12th 1993); and the frustration after the results of September's referendum on constitutional reform. The referendum result—a 99,96 per cent «yes» vote from a 97,25 per cent turnout—was seen as a triumph for Interior and Information Minister, who again showed his ability to mobilise officialdom to carry out King's desires. It is very difficult to say how long the classic case of Moroccan divide-to-rule will work for. According to the most optimistic the role of the King as religious leader makes life more difficult for religious movements opposing his rule but after the ISF triumph in Algeria in December 1991 Morocco closed—or at least tightened up—its Algerian border in January 1992.

Meanwhile, the EC Commission and member states (led by France, Portugal and Spain) persuades the EP to unblock Morocco's financial protocol, worth 463 mn. of ECUs help up by the EP's opposition to King's record on human rights and policy on the disputed Western Sahara. The Commission is working on detailed plans to implement Moroccan proposals for a joint free trade zone and is waiting for the approval from the Council of Ministers to start formal negotiations. Rabat

wants more freedom to export farm goods to the EC, but without heavy subsidies or tariff protection local industry would suffer heavily from unprecedented EC competition. In the beginning, this idea of a free trade zone was a way around the block imposed on the EC official aid by the EP as a sanction against Rabat's policy on Western Sahara and human rights.

Western Sahara

Morocco and Mauritania occupied the WS in November 1975. Previously King Hassan II launched his Green March into the WS in that month. Spain recognized a Moroccan & Mauritanian right of «administration of the territory» but not «sovereignty». Algeria responded by giving refuge and support to the Polisario Front who proclaimed the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

In the beginning the Moroccans said SADR was an invention of Algerian President Boumedienne; he died in 1978 but SADR did not disappear. They said it was merely an extension of Colonel Gaddafi but the Libyan leader stopped supporting it and became an ally of Morocco in 1984 and SADR survived. Finally, Rabat said the SADR was an extension of international communism, this finished and SADR remained.

After fifteen years of war hopes of putting an end to the conflict received an enormous impetus in 1989 when direct talks between the parties started in accordance with the peace plan designed by the then Secretary General of the UN Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. Since then we are living several delays in holding a referendum of self-determination. The two parties signed a ceasefire agreement in September 1991. In December 1992 the UN has still deployed only around Minurso peace-keeping 370 troops, split between Morocco and Polisario-controlled territory. Of more concern is the fact that the military component of Minurso is the only one in place.

The most important problem in the UN-supervised referendum is due to controversy surrounding the make-up of the electoral roll. The referendum was going to take place at the end of January 1992 but there were more and more difficulties for the census which is supposed to be the basis of it. The 1974 Spanish census of 75.000 people constitutes the starting point of the identification process for the UN but Morocco wants to include thousands of «Saharawis» who fled the combined military French & Spanish operations in 1958 and later. In essence, Morocco is pushing for voting rights to be extended to a further 120,000 people.

The UN was hoping that a meeting of Saharawi elders in Geneva in December 1992 could sort out the issue once and for all. This meeting did not take

place and Secretary General is preparing a new report on the problem to be presented before the Security Council in January 1993.

Mauritania

This is the poorest North African country and such as Sudan a very good example of African divided society. The arabised moorish see themselves as the legitimated owners of the country and this perception does not guarantee good relations either with its black population or with its neighbour Senegal.

In March 1992 the government continued the process of «controlled democratization» with general elections. The structural reform programme set up by the government, in agreement with the IMF and the World Bank has meant that the country could reschedule its debts of around \$250 mn. contracted with the Paris Club. Demonstrations took place in Nuakchott to protest at price rises following the devaluation of the national currency by 29.7 per cent in October 1992. As a result of the demonstrations, the government set up a curfew over the whole of the town.

Security and factors of imbalance

Firstly I want to talk about some military aspects of security in short. There is a growing risk of proliferation of conventional, chemical and nuclear weapons which has been accentuated after the dissolution of the Eastern bloc. It looks like some of these countries are trying to reinforce its own military power. Algeria accepted inspections by a International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team which did find nothing to suspect in the Ain Oussera reactor. But you will agree with me that the existing safeguards are not very sure; Irak accepted in the past regular inspections by the IAEA which did not find anything. Libya's sole nuclear facility is a 10 megawatt Soviet-supplied research reactor at Tajoura, on the eastern edge of Tripoli. Although Libyan officials, from Gaddafi downwards, have repeatedly expressed their abhorrence of nuclear weapons, the Libyan leader in June 1987 openly urged Arabs to develop their own atomic bomb, asserting that this was the only way that they could stand up to nuclear-armed states, including Israel.

Some of these countries can threaten Western Europe with long-range missiles but their main rivalries are with each other, and their doctrines are defined according to this reality. After the Gulf War seemed that a re-definition was born but it is not implemented up to now (either in countries or in the Arab

Maghreb Union as a whole). Wars among North African states or political changes towards radical anti-Western populism or islamism are a possibility.

We are talking about societies which are suffering a process of nation-building. The great pro-Saddam feeling during the Gulf War reflects this search of values. These are very young societies (in Algeria 75 per cent of the population in under 30 years) looking for a national identity and they have a common language and religion. But in this searching they crash very often with their governments. There is a double perception on what does Europe and the Western world in general mean. Firstly it is a model; but it feeds their frustations as well. This produces the increasing crisis and differences in values between the northern and southern Mediterranean shores. This issue is very relevant wether we want to establish a framework of cooperation.

All these regimes are looking for outside their countries wanting to do them down and there are allegations of Sudan, Iran an others supporting terrorism in Algeria, Egypt or Tunisia. The Islamist raising in Algeria has given new impetus to governments, led by Egypt and Tunisia, determined to stop the spread of Islamism from its nearest base in Khartoum. In the beginning of this month a fourteen Ministers of Interior meeting has taken place in Tunis for discussing this topic. A wider meeting is scheduled five months later in June 1993 in Cairo. Western countries are increasingly concerned by Sudan's political alliance with Iran, Iraq and Libya.

For us it is more important to study the roots of the Islamic movements within these countries, the fundamental issue raising in the region. Beside the rejection feeling towards the West combined with a return to own values there is a bad economic, social and political situation. Demonstrations and riots are very present in North Africa. In practically all Arab countries, people under 24 years of age make up between 50 and 65 per cent of the population. This means in turn that by the beginning of the next century these countries must create many jobs in order to maintain today's precarious rate of employment and this is unlikely to happen.

It provokes and feeds one of the most sensitive aspects between North Africa and Europe: the immigration. For the time-being an estimated 1.8 to 2 mn. immigrants from the Maghreb live in the EC. Up to this moment it is not an important concern but the problem is that the pressure for emigration will be tremendous and the temptation to emigrate across the Mediterranean into prosperous Western Europe almost irresistible. According to UN studies and projections, in 2025 the population of Algeria and Egypt will have almost doubled.

Finally, North African countries are beginning to experience an environmental crisis. Key factors underlying this crisis are population pressures and poverty, uncontrolled urbanization, the pressing need to boost domestic food production,

intense competition for natural resources, and environmental mismanagement. Unless effective countermeasures are taken, North Africa's environmental crisis will lead to major losses of productive cropland, rangeland, and biodiversity; serious declines in public health; and a progressive deterioration in quality of life.

North Africa and the Western world

North Africa is an important oil and gas supplier to European countries; by comparison with the Gulf its supplies have the advantage of coming from a nearer and much safer region. Egypt, Algeria, Libya and to a lesser degree Tunisia, have important oil and gas reserves. Algeria supplied 25-30 per cent of European gas imports in 1983. Morocco has no gas, but is the leading world exporter of phosphates. The Maghreb increased its exports to the wealthiest industrial countries in 1991, according to the OECD in Paris. France remained, in 1991, the main trading partner for the region being either principal importer or exporter for each Maghreb state. From a selfish point of view cooperation and improving of relations with this neighbouring region is very important for the Western world.

Neighbourhood is the second very important factor. Wars among North African states or economic and political crisis always affect and will affect the European stability. Therefore, it is important to stimulate the economic and political integration in North Africa, supporting the very often moribund Arab Maghreb Union. The EC expressed this idea in its June 1992 European Council Declaration on Europe and the Maghreb. The Western European Union has started contacts with the Maghreb countries as well.

Forums as the 5+5 are stopped because of the UN sanctions against Libya and the EC has reinforce its prospects of cooperation discussing with Morocco about a free-trade zone. The Spanish & Italian proposal for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) is waiting for the evolutions and results of the Conference on Middle East. Within the CSCM the human aspects are very important because Western world must improve its knowledge about the Islam and the islamists; probably they will rule some North African country in the near future.

It is easy to ask for aid and cooperation but the Maghreb countries, Egypt and Sudan must improve their domestic situations to be attractive:

- The Egyptian neighbouring with Libya and their special relationship —1 mn. Egyptians live in Libya, and both countries have already agreed to set up several joint ventures— could be used by the Western world for solving the tensions with Tripoli.

- The EC is studying to cut off food aid to Sudan following that country's decision to send newly-harvested cereals into foreign markets (Croatia, Somalia, Zambia and Zimbabwe). At the same time residents in the south of Sudan have to pay exorbitant prices for the few food items they receive from Khartoum or Nairobi. The factors of confrontation remain up to this moment.
- The AMU integration does not work very fast. Algeria's trade with other Maghreb countries in 1992 has remained static, an almost negligible at 1,55 per cent of its international trade. Morocco and Tunisia are looking for unilateral concessions from the EC. They are trying to get their own position.
- The delays in holding a referendum in Western Sahara create frustration and it is a factor of instability. Namibia's referendum went through similar delays right through the 80s. The next Ghali's report must give some ideas about its implementation.

In essence very deep reforms are necessary. Meanwhile the gap between the levels of growth North-South is growing ever wider. The last and most important question is how can the Western countries reconcile their demands on political and economic reforms in North African countries without destabilizing existing governments.

