GENERAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

Alvaro Vasconcelos[1]

The countries of Western Europe are faced with the problem of defining a common, comprehensive approach to Mediterranean issues. Until recently they tended to focus their attention on economic aspects of links with the region, but the importance of political aspects has now been realised. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership launched at Barcelona in November 1995,[2] which seeks to achieve a balance between political, econ-omic and human relationships across the Mediterranean, is in a way a response to all those who maintained that these had to be based on a 'necessary solidarity', and that in the field of security there exists an institutional vacuum that has to be filled if the Mediterranean is to become a region of stability and peace.

To begin with, an observation: relations between Europe and northern Africa[3] in the field of security, which are full of misunderstandings, are characterised by distorted perceptions and images of Islam and political Islamism, which are often confused, and by the threat or reality of terrorism, which extremist nationalist movements on both sides use to further their demagogic ends. These misunderstandings stem in the first place from mutual ignorance. A certain confusion is, however, partly intended, especially since in the South political debate on the military dimension of security is still almost taboo. As Hamadi Essid has remarked, 'there is still a need to define and redefine terms which, rather than contributing to the dialogue we desire, reduce it to a series of parallel monologues and, at several levels, reinforce misunderstandings.'[4]

At Barcelona, it was agreed that security aspects of the political dialogue in the Mediterranean should be developed. For that to be possible, Europe will have to have an objective awareness of the real security questions that arise, as well as northern African policies and priorities, and realise what is actually at stake.

Security: a concept that covers a number of different concerns

Analysing the problem of security in the Mediterranean region and the security policies of northern African countries raises a certain number of semantic difficulties, which is an added complication. The concept of security itself varies not only between the two shores of the Mediterranean but also from one northern African country to another. We shall first try to distinguish the different meanings and then to understand the many concerns covered by the term security.

In northern Africa today, security has a very wide sense, including numerous aspects - economic, political, social and cultural - in addition to the purely military aspect, although not all necessarily see security in the same way. We shall attempt here to bring out the main elements, which in reality are often superimposed, of this concept of wider security: economic security, national security and security of identity.

The notion of *economic security* is based on the idea of dependence on the outside world, the existence of a centre (the West, which exploits) and a periphery (the Third World, which is exploited); this was the viewpoint of the non-aligned countries, which have included two particularly active countries in northern Africa, Algeria and

Egypt, the first of which put forward the concept at a summit meeting of non-aligned countries in its capital in 1973. At present, if the economic aspect is still an integral part of this notion, the West is no longer seen simply as the generator of dependence but rather as an unavoidable partner if countries in the region are to overcome the economic weaknesses that are the cause of serious social and political problems. Economic security is becoming less rhetorical and less of a unifying factor, and more a real concern and more national. Today, carrying through reforms, increasing productivity, entering the international system and ensuring free access to the markets of the industrialised North are priorities in all countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

Concerns are felt over financial dependence (debt) and supplies of certain essential foodstuffs. It is sometimes a matter of 'the need to guarantee sovereignty in the question of food supplies'.(5) Incidentally, the concern over guaranteed sources of energy and water has led some authors to take the view that security should be seen more in geo-economic than in geo-political terms.(6) In this context the problem of sources of water assumes special importance in the Middle East and Egypt, which cannot afford, for this reason among others, not to be concerned over the stability of countries through which the Nile flows. Egypt and Morocco depend on the situation in countries in the Gulf region, which partly explains their military participation in the US-led coalition during the war against Iraq. Currency earned by Egyptians working in the Gulf countries accounts for Egypt's current transactions surplus, whereas its trade balance shows a considerable deficit.(7) In the case of Morocco, oil is one of its main imports. Whereas Libya and Algeria are net exporters of energy, Mauritania and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia, are dependent on imports of oil or gas. Concerns that dependence on energy supplies have created in a number of Arab countries are nearly as acute as in European countries and the United States, for which the uninterrupted supply of oil and gas is vital.

As regards the concept of *national security*, which is dominant in northern Africa, governments' worries about what they see as 'internal threats' come well before their need to deal with external threats. In other words, there is often confusion between the state's interests and those of a particular government. When internal issues dominate, all of the activities of society tend to be perceived as having a direct influence on the security of the state. In many countries this has been the case during the phase of nation-building that follows independence. After Algeria's independence in 1962, the army found itself running the state to which it had given birth.(8) The distinction between its role *vis-à-vis* an external threat and that of defender of the regime has been allowed to diminish and disappear.(9) As opposition parties have become more powerful, in particular with the rise of Islamic extremism and the emergence of armed groups, the notion of national security has become flexible and taken to extremes in certain countries. The more that political regimes feel threatened from within, the more political pluralism and civil society are made fragile and the more the concept of national security becomes equated with security of the regime; the role of the army becomes less clear and its use to enforce law and order is legitimated. The regional and international contexts are then perceived essentially in terms of their impact on the development of domestic policy.

The priority given by the governments of northern African countries to the internal threat does not, however, eclipse concerns for foreign policy and defence in the true

sense. Defence policies equally depend on the external threat that is perceived to be posed by neighbouring countries in a South-South context.

Also, the concept of national security as it relates to the external threat is not totally free from concerns about what is happening internally, as political Islamism can have an external basis. In spite of its almost exclusively rhetorical nature, Iran's support for the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) led to Algiers breaking off diplomatic relations with Tehran; on several occasions, Egypt has accused Sudan of giving training, including military training, to Egyptian Islamist groups, in particular at the time of the attempted assassination of President Mubarak at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)summit in Addis Ababa in June 1995.

The role of the army and the influence it has on the definition of security policy vary from one country to another. The situation in Algeria, for example, where the army and the government are in practice merged, is the opposite of that in Morocco, where the army, which has until now been isolated from questions of internal politics and has concentrated on the conflict in the Sahara, has been strictly controlled by the government. Politico-military relations assume great importance during a period of transition, as was the case in the countries of southern Europe that became democratic in the 1970s; it is what can also be observed in the processes of political reform that have begun in northern Africa.

The most worrying aspect of the wider security concept, or rather its most perverse outbursts (which are also seen in the North), is that it involves firstly *security of identity*, which is in the first instance concerned with the defence of an identity that is threatened. That, basically, is the point of view of the political Islamist movements, where the expressions 'political Islamism' and 'radical Islamism' are both used to designate a variety of popularly based political movements whose goal is the creation of a theocracy and the overthrow of governments in place, through peaceful or violent means or a combination of the two. In fact, their idea of security is linked with moral, cultural and 'civilisational' questions posed in the name of the 'purity' of Islam, as if it is only now, after its two first phases, political and economic, that decolonisation may have reached the last phase, which is cultural.[(10)] This point of view was expressed very clearly by the FIS leader Ali Ben Hadj, who said before the Algerian elections of 1991, 'And if my father and his brothers [in religion] physically threw out the oppressive French from Algeria, I, together with my brothers, with weapons and with faith, dedicate myself to banishing them intellectually and ideologically, and having done with their supporters ...'[(11)] Was not the prime target of the Iranian revolution Western, American culture? The Algerian Islamists, in their turn, attack governments accused of importing from the West 'morals contrary to those of Islam',[(12)] which would lead to social inequality and economic dependence, French-speaking intellectuals and secularism (which is equated with atheism), 'paradiabolicals' and the emancipation of women, all of which, in their eyes, represent an intolerable intrusion by the West. The Islamists are thus tending to replace pan-Arab nationalism by pan-Islamist nationalism.

This vision, which is based on xenophobia and identity, is also present in the North in another, equally primary form, among the extremist nationalist movements that campaign for the expulsion of immigrants of other cultures and religions, who are considered to represent a threat to the national identity and therefore to security. The

idea is presented in a more sophisticated way in the thinking of authors like Samuel P. Huntington,[13] for whom 'civil-izational' identity will be the determining factor in the future international system: 'The great division among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be culture'. This idea belongs to a current of thought that, in both the North and the South, would put the clash of civilizations at the heart of present and future intra-state and inter-state conflicts and try to explain, on the basis of ethnic and religious conflicts alone, the present process of disintegration of certain states. This amounts to maintaining that religious and cultural differences are not a source of permanent enrichment of society but on the contrary a source of tensions that tend to be resolved through violence.

Economic security, national security and occasionly security of identity in some cases come together in a single concept that is at once too flexible because it tries to include everything and too restrictive because it gives priority to areas that are not exclusively to do with security. Abdallah Saaf questions whether such overlapping, which is facilitated by the 'flexible' and trivial use of the term security, is not the exclusive domain of non-democratic regimes.[14]

The too close links established between economic and national security must not be confused with the concept accepted in the West since the end of the Cold War in which economic, political or even social and environmental aspects are not overlooked. As has often been remarked, in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue things that are fundamentally different are dealt with although the terminology used is similar. In Europe, when one talks of wider security it means in particular that one is not overlooking the importance of the social and political factors, nor the national and regional circumstances that could contribute to crisis situations and then degenerate into armed conflict. From this viewpoint, it appears clearly that the real or potential sources of instability in northern Africa are neither strategic nor military, but rather political, economic and social. To prevent such crises, it is therefore essential to formulate an integrated response that addresses the underlying economic and political causes as a first priority. This, moreover, remains the position of the European Union as a whole (it does not necessarily reflect the view of all of its member countries) best suited to its characteristics as a civil power that, being unable to meet the challenges of security in the strict sense ('hard' security), still prefers to make use of economic instruments, despite the progress made possible by Maastricht in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy.

To have done with confusion over semantics and avoid the negative consequences for democratic development of too wide a security culture and concept, some authors make the distinction between security and 'high politics', a notion that includes economic, political and social issues that have a decisive effect on society and foreign affairs.[15] Moreover, to designate the obvious connection, especially in the Mediterranean, between the question of security and the political, economic and social context, the term *contextual security* is used by authors to indicate that it is impossible to analyse security issues correctly out of context.[16]

Against this confused backdrop, questions of defence in the strict sense are rarely encountered. Defence policy, which is considered to be the preserve of each state, is often absent from studies devoted to security in the Mediterranean, except for those concerning the Middle East, in particular Egypt,[17] Addressing this issue is, however,

a matter of priority for transparency and mutual confidence, on which Mediterranean stability must be built, especially since the absence of a strategic language common to Europe and northern Africa, which is complicated by the ambiguity of the concepts used, constitutes one of the misunderstandings, and not the least of them.

It is true that in Europe the strategic language, until now considerably marked by bipolarity, is extremely codified and unsuited to conveying a security concept, in which there is no overall, perfectly defined threat, that is developing in the direction of cooperative security. In the South, on the other hand, definitions are much vaguer, and a language with Third World overtones is still used in many cases. This situation of relative incomprehension has improved slightly recently, in particular thanks to the development of strategic studies in northern Africa and efforts to cooperate made in this field by specialists on both sides of the Mediterranean.(18)

An entirely new context

In speaking of security in northern Africa, from Egypt to Mauritania, a range of widely differing realities have to be taken into account: the Arab-Israeli problem in the case of Egypt, nationalist policy in Libya, specific problems in the central Maghreb and the fragile nature of society and the state in Mauritania. Both a source of division and a 'federating' element, political Islamism cannot be omitted from the analysis, given its internal and regional impact.

The following types of question arise. How have changes in the inter-national context and the Middle East in recent years affected the security of these countries? How did they react to the Gulf war? How do the countries of northern Africa see their role in the changed international order? In what ways is the rise of Islamism reflected in relations between these states? What are the chances of cooperation between the North and the South on security issues?

Perceptions in the post-Cold War period

If the impact of the end of the Cold War on the two shores of the Mediterranean is hardly comparable, several writers have stressed the increased vulnerability or marginalisation that it could imply for northern Africa. The world is no longer bipolar, and non-alignment has lost its *raison d'être*. No state can count on contradictions between the superpowers. The northern African countries are all seeking new forms of integration in the international system without neglecting the economic aspect, which is crucial for each of them, and are as a result redefining their Mediterranean relationships. Only Libya is still doomed to ostracism, seemingly wishing to manage its largely intentional isolation through alternating signs of enmity (for instance by expelling immigrants, in particular Palestinian) and offers to use its good offices (to assist the Sudan regime).

The Gulf war may have both precipitated changes in the international order and revealed their repercussions, while increasing the gap that already existed between governments' priorities and popular perceptions.

Divisions within the Arab League are becoming greater, and the improvement of relations with Israel is nullifying part of the concept of Arab national security, which

during the Gulf war had the result of putting the countries of northern Africa in opposing camps. Only Morocco and Egypt took part in the coalition, the former supporting the resolution of the latter condemning Iraq's action at the Arab League summit held in Cairo in August 1990. Tunisia, which sought an Arab solution to the conflict, did not participate in the Cairo meeting. Libya, in an attempt to emerge from its isolation, maintained an ambiguous attitude throughout the duration of the crisis, although it expressed some support for the Egyptian position. Mauritania was from the beginning critical of Cairo's position and that of the multinational coalition, and Algeria tried without success to act as a mediator.

In all of these countries, the public, who felt their view had been neglected and considered the new international order to be unjust, supported Saddam Hussein and opposed Operation DESERT STORM, which was seen as an attempt to destroy a powerful Arab country; this position was openly shared only by the Mauritanian leadership.(19) In Algeria, the development of the crisis in the Gulf led to a build-up of nationalist sentiment, a clear reflection of the public mood, while the various political parties, who were in the middle of electoral campaigning, tried to outdo each other in anti-Western, pro-Iraqi rhetoric. Initially the FIS, which was supported financially by Saudi Arabia, hesitated, then, afraid of becoming less popular than the FLN, unreservedly supported the regime of Saddam Hussein. In Morocco, which took part in the coalition, the general feeling among the population, clearly seen in the size of the demonstrations (in particular the general strike of January 1991) against the American intervention, found an echo in the palace. On several occasions the King emphasised that Moroccan troops were not in the Gulf in order to liberate Kuwait but to assure the defence of Saudi Arabia, especially the holy places. In Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania, demonstrations in support of Iraq and inflammatory anti-Western speeches, directed at France and the United States in particular, followed one after another.

Whereas in the final years of the Cold War period governments in the region had become more realistic, the public and a part of the intelligentsia have not abandoned the former Third World, anti-Western leaning of Arab nationalism. Contrary to what is widely believed, public opinion is of major import-ance in the Arab countries. The public know how to make their discontent heard, and governments are now obliged to take account of their voice, since it is precisely on popular discontent that political Islamism feeds.

Today, governments everywhere in northern Africa are confronted with popular demands that they take a position on causes considered of importance to the Islamic world, such as the war in Bosnia. During the four years preceding the Dayton accords, these governments had great difficulty in explaining that in Bosnia it was not a question of a war between civilisations or a war of religion, which could have incited the mobilisation of the Islamic countries against the West, but of Serb aggression, against a multicultural, multi-religious state, that had been condemned by the West despite the weakness of the intervention by its security organisations and resultant loss of credibility.

For the most part, the public in the region see this incompetence on the part of Europe as proof of its anti-Muslim complicity. Religious leaders consider that deliberate negligence by the EUand its member states can only be attributed to religious

discrimination.[20] The support that the Bosnian cause has undoubtedly gained among the European public and opinion-formers has not been acknowledged south of the Mediterranean, even among Arab intellectuals who closely follow the debate in Europe.

Confronted by the flagrant difference in the speed and scope of the Western reaction to aggressors of the Muslim faith and those of the Orthodox religion - Iraq and the Serbs - the people of northern Africa accuse the West of applying double standards in an unjust international order that marginalises them or, worse still, is ranging itself against the South, which it apparently perceives as the new threat. It is in this light that the redefinition of NATO's roles in the Mediterranean is interpreted. Imprecision concerning the role of EUROFOR and EUROMARFOR, which include naval units and troops from Portugal, Spain, France and Italy, are seen by specialists from northern Africa as an indication of their true mission: nothing other than intervention on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

The EUhas until now been the only European institution that the public and governing élite have viewed, not with mistrust but, on the contrary, with a degree of hope. However, the EUis increasingly seen by them as a club that is only concerned with its present or future members, while Europe closes its doors to northern African products and immigrants.

Islamism at the heart of the debate

With the end of the Cold War and the improvement of Arab-Israeli relations, a convergence between Egypt and the countries of the Maghreb is beginning to appear, as economic aspects and the Islamist factor assume greater importance.

The governments of Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, which are attempting to counter the Islamic fundamentalism that threatens their survival, are giving priority to development. In Algeria, the deterioration of the situation has made the military factor crucial in anti-Islamist policy. In Libya, the Gaddafi regime continues to combat the Islamists and any other opposition through its monopoly of power. For the governments of all these countries, Islamism now represents *the threat* that overrides all other regional, South-South tensions, even though these have not disappeared. Border disputes have for the most part been resolved or are in the process of being resolved. The only remaining serious territorial dispute is that of the Western Sahara, which Algeria does not wish to see become an integral part of Morocco.

The scenario that is most feared in a South-South context is that an Islamist government comes to power in Algeria, in particular because of its impact on Tunisia, where towards the end of the 1980s political Islamism became the main opposition force. The Tunisian *En Nahda* (Party of the Renaissance) found support among the Algerian FIS and used areas on the border with Algeria to launch propaganda, particularly radio broadcasts. As for the impact that the advent of an Islamist government in Algeria would have on the Western Sahara, that is difficult to predict. The declarations of some FISleaders to the effect that the question of the Western Sahara would be easier to resolve by an Islamist government prepared to recognise its 'Moroccan-ness' (which would partly explain Morocco's accommodating attitude towards this movement) cannot be taken literally: the nationalist character of the FIS

belies them straight away. Moreover, Moroccan complaisance, which includes not explicitly condemning the FIS, is explained by the difficult relationship between the two major countries of the central Maghreb. Thus, certain Moroccan Islamist leaders, who were very critical of the position taken by the Alaoui monarchy at the time of the 'Green March' - considered by them to be 'erroneous in three ways, historically, religiously and politically'[(21)] - now publicly acknowledge 'the unquestionable Moroccan-ness' of the Western Sahara. Once the question of the Sahara is settled, if the claims of the Polisario Front are not met, which will probably be the case, the problem of its marginalised armed men, who will be exposed to Islamist or other plans for destabilisation, will have potentially serious implications for Algeria and Mauritania.[(22)] Because of its fragile nature, indeed its internal rifts, Mauritania, which is essential to the equilibrium of the region, is very sensitive to regional tensions.

Three groups or models of attitudes of governments or élites towards political Islamism can be distinguished. There is the attitude of the 'eradicators', who are in favour of the total exclusion of radical Islamists from the political arena; that is the attitude taken at present by Algeria and, with subtle differences, Egypt and Tunisia. Next is 'assimilation', in other words controlled and limited assimilation of Islamists in political life, yet without going as far as to allow participation in elections; that is what is happening in Morocco. Lastly, there is 'integration', which is today advocated by the sectors of the Algerian opposition who were signatories to the Rome platform, and was formerly used to varying degrees and then abandoned, by Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria. In spite of obvious divergences, all seek the support of the EU, although it is itself torn in various directions by disagreements between member states, which hesitate over the policy to follow on Islamism and its radical variant, and are divided into those who tend towards the 'integrationists', who are more influential in the Nordic countries, and the 'eradicators'. Arab opposition leaders, in particular those who wish to settle the Algerian crisis politically and took part in the Rome meetings, consider EUintervention to be essential as support for the process of reform and dialogue. However, they are afraid that the EUmay accept a solution that only the most radical forces (in the case of Algeria, those who dispose of military means) would be in a position to support. The signatories of the Rome platform having called for a boycott of elections, the partial success of the Algerian presidential referendum of 16 November 1995 has weakened them, but a political solution has not as a result become any less necessary, as the continuing violence has shown.

Foreign relations (outside the region) are now determined by a search for partners that can contribute to solving the economic and social crisis and neutralising radical political Islamism. This tendency, which has become more pronounced since the end of the Cold War, was already evident in the Maghreb, particularly in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, from the second half of the 1980s. The desire to bind itself to Europe explains Morocco's request for membership of the EU; the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989 is explained, aside from regional motives, by the need to unite better to organise relations with Europe; Maghreb countries' interest in strengthening their relations with Europe, especially southern Europe, also led to their participation in the initiative for cooperation in the western Mediterranean launched in 1990, in Rome, subsequently called the 'Five plus Five'.

For the time being the North is not perceived as a threat - in any case not a military threat - either by governments in the Maghreb (except Tripoli) or by the sectors of the

élite who have nothing against Islam but fear an Islamic state; rather, the North is seen as an essential partner whose intrusive presence is not feared but rather its lack of interest. Governments and intellectuals who advocate secularism fear: (a) that the North will renounce its programme of economic aid or make it conditional on political reform; (b) that the question of the Maghreb, which is now a European political issue because of the presence of large immigrant communities in Europe, could be used in a demagogic and often xenophobic way for domestic political motives; (c) that radical Islamist movements could obtain material support in Europe and the United States.

The Maghreb is not greatly preoccupied with the military aspects that concern Europe. Possible scenarios include selective intervention in the event of the deterioration of an internal conflict, especially in Algeria, in particular to evacuate European nationals, and in particularly serious cases in support of an ally in a conflict between Maghreb states. Such a possibility is, however, considered very unlikely by many specialists on northern Africa. Yet that is not the view of the public, to judge by public reaction to the Gulf war. Among territorial disputes from the past inherited from the presence of colonial powers in northern Africa, there remains only the question of Ceuta and Melilla, on which both Spain and Morocco, given their cooperation in several areas, prefer to let time do its work in producing a satisfactory solution. Only a very serious crisis in Morocco would put this policy of prudence in danger. Incidentally, resolution of the question of Gibraltar would be bound to affect the future of these enclaves.

Meanwhile, it has been Egypt that has changed the direction of its foreign and security policies most. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s, this country, which has taken a greater interest in the situation in the Mediterranean and drawn closer to both Europe and the Maghreb,[23] has asked for membership of the AMU and in 1994 launched the Mediterranean Forum. The Middle East problem and relations with Israel and the United States as well as the Gulf countries are not considered any less central to internal and regional stability. It is, however, clear that Europe occupies a more important position in Egyptian foreign policy.Apart from its economic concerns, two factors account for this. *Vis-à-vis* Islamism, the position of European governments, those in the south in particular, is nearer than the United States's to that of Cairo. The United States tends to favour the integration of Islamists into the political arena;[24] Egypt is seeking in other ways to balance its relationship with the Americans, now that the collapse of the Soviet Union has deprived it of any alternative.

Egypt thus tends to differentiate decreasingly between the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean basin. The possible consequences of its interest in the Maghreb depend on several factors: the possible relaunching of economic cooperation within the AMU, the way Israel's policy towards the peace process develops and consequently the process of cooperation and integration in the Middle East. What Egypt is attempting to do is to reconcile the assertion of its new Mediterranean policy and its wish to work for a type of pan-Arabism that is likely to increase its influence, and thus to be the kingpin in relations with Israel.[25]

Cairo's concerns over Israel's nuclear capability should also be noted.[26] The issue has been debated bilaterally at a high level. According to the daily *Haaretz*, Israel would

be prepared to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) two years after the conditions for peace in the region have been achieved.(27) Considering itself the mainspring of regional security, at the beginning of 1995 Egypt insisted that it would not sign if Israel did not and, on the eve of the New York conference, was still resisting pressure from the Americans and Europeans for an indefinite extension.(28) Having failed to convince other Arab countries of the advantages of a partial extension before Israel became a signatory of the NPT,(29) in the end Cairo followed the others in seeking an indefinite extension.

Egypt's concerns over Israel, which has since the peace treaty of 1979 ceased to be a direct military threat, have however not disappeared, and its defence policy is still influenced by the possibility of a reversal of Israel's position.(30) Present difficulties in the Israel-Palestine peace process reinforce these concerns.

Prospects of cooperation with Europe

Since the end of the Cold War, and particularly with the peace process between the Palestinians and Israel, the security situation in the Mediterranean today is characterised by the fact that, both in the South and in the North, there is a state of *security without a threat*. The North has suddenly found itself without the adversary that, over a period of forty years, was the *raison d'être* for its collective security organisations, and countries on the southern shore are also tending to lose their 'enemy number one' (which had a doubly 'federating' effect through support for the Palestinian cause and Arab-Islamic solidarity). This development is very important for Egypt: it is here that is to be found one of the deep-seated reasons for Egypt's pan-Arabist ambitions, at a time when the split between pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism is tending to grow wider. With the sudden absence of the traditional threat, the North and the South may be tempted to make a substitute enemy out of political Islamism. The conditions are, however, present, at least between the two sides of the Mediterranean, in which cooperation on security issues can be envisaged, with priorities established that are no longer for action *against* (a 'federating' opponent) but *for* (the prevention of conflicts).

The United Nations, questions of collective security and peacekeeping operations all offer possible ways for northern African countries to play an operational part in the new world order. Since 1994 Egypt, a potential candidate for a new permanent seat in the Security Council, has taken part in many peacekeeping operations. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have until now been less active in this respect, but the presence of Moroccan troops alongside those from Europe and the United States in the IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina should be underlined. Algeria's participation in UNoperations must be mentioned, in that it is breaking with its tradition of not deploying troops abroad. The question is whether, in the coming years, there will be greater participation by Maghreb countries in UNpeacekeeping operations. Perhaps it will be necessary to resolve the incompatibility between the desire to play a more active role internationally and the tendency, particularly among the public, to consider that the great powers are in a sense imposing a right to interfere through humanitarian operations. Northern African countries, notably Egypt and Tunisia, are working on the creation, within the OAU, of forces that can take part in UNoperations. Acting in their capacity as president of the OAU, in 1994 and 1995, they were particularly active in the setting up of an African mechanism for conflict prevention, management and

resolution. This is an area of possible cooperation; since the crisis in Rwanda, the Europeans have been anxious to contribute to the development of an African capability to prevent crises but also to intervene militarily, in the framework of peacekeeping operations in sub-Saharan Africa.(31)

What policy should Europe adopt?

For Europe, the November 1995 Barcelona Conference marked the end of a long process of awareness of the need to integrate the Mediterranean region into its economic sphere. During the 1980s, it was already clear to the Europeans that the countries of northern Africa were experiencing an economic and social crisis that was made worse by population growth and, for various reasons and to varying degrees, current regimes' lack of political legitimacy. According to some, Europe had to develop a preventive strategy, along economic and social lines, with the aim of stabilising the region and limiting population growth so as to reduce the Islamists' political room for manoeuvre and slow down migratory flows. This was the reasoning underlying initiatives such as the arrangement known as 'Five plus Five', the EC's Redirected Mediterranean Policy and the idea of co-development.(32) Today, as a result of both the paucity of past efforts and the difficulties encountered by attempts at political reform in the Maghreb, the prospects are quite different. The crisis they were intended to prevent is already a reality, and is very serious in the case of Algeria. Political aspects now take precedence over economic factors, and security issues are beginning to be taken into account in relations between Europe and northern Africa.

Regarding the defence policies of countries in the region and the military means at their disposal, European governments are obliged to recognise that there is no threat to them from this area. Four types of security challenge can nevertheless be identified: the emergence of a radical Islamist government, whose exact form is difficult to predict but which would undoubtedly be ideologically hostile towards Europe; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; a conflict between neighbours or the demise of a state; a rise in terrorism and the reappearance of state terrorism, with all its possible consequences for European citizens living in these countries and for the European continent itself. To include emigration in a list of security challenges, as often happens, is a dangerous mistake, since it leads to confusion between economic and social issues and security (including internal security), and helps the cause of extreme right-wing demagogy in Europe.

Taken individually, none of these problems, not even the advent of an Islamist government in northern Africa, would really pose a danger to European security, but if they all had to be dealt with simultaneously things would be much more complicated. A conflict between neighbouring states or the collapse of a state would inevitably have repercussions, given the close relations that countries in the south of Europe, France in particular, have with states in northern Africa, and because it would probably involve at least a large-scale humanitarian operation (which is impossible to dissociate completely from the use of military forces). Another important element is the supply of gas to Europe from Algeria, which passes through Morocco and Tunisia and could therefore be threatened by a situation of prolonged war or the break-up of a state.

In order to meet the existing challenges, an attempt must first be made to resolve the political, economic and social problems that contribute to the rise of extremism. That is why European support for political initiatives is crucial; for it to be effective, member countries of the EUwill have to agree on their priorities and on the coherent management of issues of common interest - not only radical Islamism but also political conditionality, cooperation and immigration. The necessary dialogue on the development of democracy and human rights in northern Africa must be pursued taking into account all the differences in culture and civilisation. It is in this way that the problem of migration can also usefully be tackled. This is a fundamental aspect of Euro-Maghreb relations on the social and economic levels, and an essential element in the political dialogue concerning basic rights, in particular the rights of minorities, and the right to religious and cultural diversity in Europe and elsewhere.

Dealing with this subject with northern African countries is more complex than with, for example, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The first reason for this difficulty is not the more or less authoritarian nature of these regimes or their receptiveness to Third World doctrines, but rather the fact that, independently of apparent or real concessions to political Islamism, they see in overtures from Europe a form of interference, an attempt to deny them the right to cultural difference. This respect for differences in civilisation should not, however, be confused with theories that maintain that countries in the South suffer from an endemic inability to share universal values with Europe. The success of European support for the process of democratisation and the protection of human rights in this part of the world thus presupposes that the difference between civilisations is respected, including the guarantee of the cultural and religious rights of Maghreb communities in Europe. In this area, it is also important not to limit political transition and multi-party participation in elections without taking account of constitutional aspects, electoral laws and, in certain cases, political compromise between factions among the élites. Algeria and, further south, Angola, are two examples that should not be repeated. South Africa, on the other hand, is a case of 'coming to terms with transition' that should be closely studied.

Although the distinction between the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean is becoming blurred, the concept still has a certain usefulness when discussing European security. The situation in the Maghreb has direct consequences for Europe, because of its proximity and certain potential South-South conflicts.(33) As for the Middle East, the implications are not of the same order and are above all seen in terms of oil supplies. Europe's responsibilities and influence are increasing but are not always decisive. The United States, on the other hand, continues to play a decisive role in the Middle East where, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has had no competition to face. Unlike Europe, the United States offers security guarantees to several states. For the United States, it is a question of a region to be dealt with quite independently of European security.

Unlike Europe, where there is a panoply of institutions, in northern Africa there is no regional collective security framework. The area is at present characterised by strategic fragmentation, indeed by a retreat from cooperative ventures in the Maghreb. It is thus difficult for the EU to form an integrated, coherent policy towards it. The strategic 'vacuum' between the two shores of the Mediterranean is another challenge that has to be taken up. Attempts to fill this vacuum are multiplying, but partner

institutions in the South are still fragile. It is true that the profusion of initiatives, their lack of consistency and the fact that they are in most cases competitive rather than complementary, does not help matters.(34)

The AMU, which was conceived as an attempt at political and economic cooperation between the Maghreb countries that includes the setting up of structures for cooperation in defence matters, is almost paralysed.(35) The Arab League is not and has never been a framework for collective security. The crisis prevention and management mechanism created by the OAU, which is concerned essentially with sub-Saharan Africa, is far from being a true security instrument. On a wider scale, including both shores, the OSCE (formerly the CSCE) which in its meetings has always formulated conclusions on 'questions related to security and cooperation in the Mediterranean', has never really examined this problem. Its recommendations on the Mediterranean only concern culture and ecology, and the north African countries have moreover never been admitted as *ex officio* members.(36)

The idea suggested by Italy and Spain in 1990 that a CSCM along the lines of the then CSCE should be set up got no farther than being a project that was at once too ambitious because of the number of participants and impossible to implement as long as the Middle East conflict was not resolved. The French initiative for cooperation in the western Mediterranean taken by President Mitterrand in 1983, which since 1990 has included the countries of southern Europe and the AMU, was not really successful. Security issues were excluded from this cooperation, and it was precisely the security repercussions of the Libyan question and the crisis in Algeria that nearly killed the 'Five plus Five'.

While emphasising economic, scientific and technological cooperation, an Egyptian initiative, the Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Mediterranean launched in Alexandria in July 1994,(37) instituted a political dialogue along inter-cultural lines. This enterprise, which is fairly informal, does not include the EU, the only organisation capable of contributing in a decisive way to the urgent economic problems of countries to the south of the Mediterranean. It responds in particular to Egypt's wish to play the European card, which explains the lack of enthusiasm shown by the countries of the Maghreb.

Other multilateral initiatives have been taken, mostly in connection with the Middle East peace process, for instance the working groups set up following the donor conference,(38) such as the Working Group for Regional Economic Development, in which the EU plays an important role along with the United States. Mention should also be made of the economic summits in Casablanca (1994) and Amman (1995), covering the Middle East and the Maghreb, that the Americans have taken in hand.

On the specific issue of security, recent efforts have aimed at countering, through dialogue, existing negative perceptions. An example of this is the dialogue between WEU, Egypt, the Maghreb countries less Libya, and Israel. WEU's aim is not so much to stress the creation of a multilateral Mediterranean security framework but rather the establishment of exchanges with each of the countries concerned, while at the same time making military activities in the Mediterranean more transparent.(39) Military cooperation itself occurs strictly at the bilateral level. Are the Maghreb countries ready, following the marked drop in enthusiasm for sub-regional integration, to

consider a multilateral debate on security issues? It is difficult to reply with certainty. What, on the other hand, is in no doubt, is that this area is still an extremely sensitive one, full of dangerous ambiguities.

In February 1995 NATO envisaged an exploratory dialogue with Mediterranean countries: Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and, more recently, Jordan.(40) The institutionalisation by this organisation of a sort of 'partnership for peace' with the countries of this region is not yet being contemplated. Reactions were not slow in coming. In Algeria, circles close to the government found in this idea encouragement for their anti-Islamist policy and understood very well the reasons why they had not been invited to participate. Others saw the initiative as an alliance against their country, which was following a path to 'Islamisation'. The Algiers daily *La Tribune* considered that NATO was treating Algeria like Iran, and was preparing a regional defence arrangement to ward off the dangers that Algeria might pose.(41) Several articles in the Maghreb press stressed, in particular following the declarations of Willy Claes, the NATO Secretary-General at the time, that Europe had at last found an enemy, a 'global threat' capable of replacing the defunct Soviet threat. These misunderstandings show, on the other hand, just how important it is to take into account the differences in perception between governments and the public in any initiative connected with Mediterranean security.

Increasingly, the tendency seems to be towards an integrated European approach, as shown by the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Barcelona, whose aim is to associate the political dimension with economic aspects. Nevertheless, security issues are still treated with much hesitation. It was not by chance that WEUwas not present at Barcelona.

The aim of that conference was to create an overall framework for Mediterranean cooperation. In addition to economic, social and environmental questions, the subjects discussed included certain preconditions related to security in the Mediterranean region, such as the establishment of the political relationships necessary for the creation of a climate of mutual confidence. It linked the idea of setting up, around the year 2010, a Euro-Mediterranean area of free exchange with the promotion of democracy and the defence of human rights, one of its most interesting aspects. However, the EUdoes not yet have a common position on either the crisis in Algeria or the attitude to adopt *vis-à-vis* radical Islamism. This deficiency hinders the deepening of the political and security dimension of the conference and explains why it is difficult to converse with the United States on this subject, even though that is a necessity at both the security and political levels.

The tone used in the final document shows the wish to give a political content to Euro-Mediterranean relations, *inter alia* in the field of security. A process was begun that could lead to the creation of an institutional framework for multilateral cooperation in this sphere. Although the United States was not present at Barcelona, because of European opposition, it cannot be excluded from the security initiatives that will follow. This multilateral mechanism should in addition result in common action within the CFSP In any event, it will necessarily mean taking into account regional diversity and the need for complementarity, which have been missing from the various initiatives undertaken previously. In other words, inter-Mediterranean relations will have to extend wider and take into account the usefulness of pursuing

and developing subregional initiatives, giving priority as necessary to those concerning the peace process in the Middle East and those, like the AMU, which it is hoped will emerge from their state of lethargy. The proposal for a Mediterranean Pact, broadly similar to that proposed by France for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is of interest provided it is integrated into the Euro-Mediterranean initiative.

To be effective, the dialogue begun by WEUwith countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean will have to be integrated in any initiative by the European Union that could carry forward the Barcelona process. This dialogue will have to be centred on cooperation in defence matters and be based on what already exists at the bilateral level between the countries of the region.

If it is not to end in failure, any Mediterranean cooperative initiative must be based on an integrated approach to economic, political and security issues, including 'hard' security. The EU, which is seen by governments and Arab public opinion alike as an economic power that is essential to the solution of the region's problems, will necessarily be involved. Security issues will have to be dealt with in a very explicit way in this wider context, and this will have to include transparency in military activities and arms control. Without mutual confidence, any project, whether political or economic, will fail.