Arms Control in the Mediterranean Area: A European Perspective

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The issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Mediterranean area raises a dual problem of definition:

- First, the range of weapons involved need to be defined. In the 1950s, the terminology used was NBC weapons (nuclear, biological and chemical weapons). Terminology has changed with military technology, however, and the more common term is now weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMD), a more comprehensive term. In addition to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, this usually covers the devices which may be used to carry such weapons, including ballistic missiles, even though these carriers can be, and usually are, equipped with conventional munitions. It seems, however, illogical to place nuclear weapons and other weapons into the same category, as the former are deterrents and the latter are weapons intended for use. None the less, this conventional approach to definition will be maintained in this discussion, firstly because it forms the basis for today's strategic debate, and secondly because as regards nuclear weapons in the region, the essential issue of debate is whether these weapons are, in fact, intended for use or merely as a deterrent.
- The second part of the definitional problem, which is more difficult to resolve, is of a geographical nature. To take only the countries participating in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) into consideration would be to oversimplify the matter. This would leave out countries that, in the eyes of many of the parties involved, form an integral part of the regional strategic equation, and often constitute an undeniable threat to their security. Israel could not conceive of a system of arms control that did not include Iran and Iraq. Indeed, these two

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the ental ents point countries feature high on the list of security concerns of other Euro-Mediterranean countries too, even though they are not, strictly speaking, included in the area. The Euro-Mediterranean area, specified in the Barcelona Process, is meaningful on a political, diplomatic and economic level, but not in strategic terms. Libya poses an altogether different type of problem. Paradoxically, the very reasons for which it was not included in the Barcelona Process originally are those which make its integration into an overall regional security system indispensable. Therefore, for this discussion to be relevant in terms of analysis at a strategic level, it must take into account a wider area than just that defined by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

Official Nuclear States

Among European Union (EU) member states, two countries possess nuclear weapons and an explicit policy of deterrence. Although they are prepared to reduce their nuclear strength, they are far from ready to give up their status as nuclear-armed states, as recognised in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

France possesses five nuclear missile launching submarines, one of which is a 'new generation' vessel. There are two submarines (sometimes three) at sea at all times, and four are operational. They are rotated, with a fifth vessel being out of operation for maintenance purposes at all times. Each operational submarine is capable of launching nuclear missiles and carries 16 M4 missiles equipped with six nuclear warheads, which gives France a submarine capacity of 384 warheads overall. By 2015, according to plan projections, France should have four nuclear missile submarines with three sets of M51 missiles, an overall total of 288 submarine-based nuclear warheads.

France also has three Mirage 2000 squadrons (45 aircraft in all) equipped with medium-range air-to-ground nuclear missiles (ASMP). The French navy's aircraft carriers have and additional two Super-Etendard squadrons equipped with ASMP missiles (36 aircraft). By 2008, these ASMP missiles will be replaced by a slightly longer-range missile, the ASMP-1. Including the aircraft in reserve, the number of aircraft equipped with nuclear warheads in France's possession is estimated to total 80 units. Added to the submarine forces, this gives a grand total of 464 nuclear warheads.

It should be noted that, since the beginning of the 1990s, France has considerably reduced its nuclear capacity – usually of its own accord and not as a result of any treaty obligation. The medium-range Hadès ground-bised missiles were placed in reserve and then abandoned for good. The short-range Pluton missiles, which the Hadès missiles were supposed to replace, were withdrawn from service, as were the AN 52 gravitation bombs carried by

Jaguar aircraft. The planned number of new-generation nuclear missile launching submarines was reduced from six to four. France decided to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and reduced the operational status for all its nuclear forces. It was the first state to declare a moratorium on nuclear testing, although this decision was reversed by President Chirac immediately after he came to power. However, after an initial set of nuclear tests, France launched a zero option with respect to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (thus renouncing the low-power tests permitted under the initial draft of the treaty), shut down its fissile material production facilities at Pierrelate and Marcoule, closed the Mururoa site, and signed a treaty creating the nuclear-free zones of Rarotonga and Pelindaba. Finally, the ground missile site at the Plateau d'Albion (18 missiles) was closed.

This reduction was spurred by budgetary restrictions (since the overall budgetary deficit had to be reduced, the defence budget was reined in and, within it, the nuclear budget experienced the most important cutbacks) as well as strategic concerns (the overall level and nature of threat has lessened and it was necessary to participate in the general disarmament process to meet the expectations of the non-nuclear signatories of the NPT). Hence France now possesses two nuclear components only; submarine and air-borne weapons.

Great Britain possesses 288 nuclear warheads, distributed among 48 missiles on-board four submarines. In the new Trident missile (D5) programme, certain missiles may carry only one nuclear warhead rather than six, to act as an ultimate deterrent, rather than being assigned to strategic retaliation missions. Soon, Great Britain will no longer have ground or airborne weapons, and will therefore only possess one nuclear component, with a maximum capacity of 288 nuclear warheads.

The French strategy of 'dissuasion' (deterrence) can be described in fairly simple terms. Its objective is to deter all aggression towards or major threat to rance's national territory, thus transforming it into a sanctuary, or to France's vital interests. The latter, unlike the former, are not defined in geographical but in political terms. However, they are not explicitly defined in advance so to confuse and deter a potential adversary. The French concept of terrence is based on a concept of essential deterrence - that is to say that France considers that it does not need as many nuclear weapons as other countries may possess in order to wield a deterrent influence over them - and since France does not have the means to retain a large number of weapons anyway, it has made virtue out of necessity in this type of policy formulation! Under this concept of deterrence by 'the weak towards the strong', nuclear weapons have an equalising function, so that the principle of 'the more the better' becomes redundant. In short, the French concept of nuclear strategy is purely deterrent in nature. François Mitterrand often repeated the phrase that nuclear weapons are not made to win wars, but to avoid them. The French

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The Barcelona Process

concept of deterrence is also known under the rubric of 'touts azimuts', meaning that French nuclear weapons are not directed against any one specific country, for their sole function is to protect the national sanctuary and vital national interests, regardless of whom the potential aggressor may be.

According to France's Ministry of Defence 1994 White Paper on Defence: The French concept of 'dissuasion' will continue to be defined as the will and ability to intimidate an adversary to such an extent that they are deterred from threatening our vital interests, regardless of who they are, what levels of damage they are prepared to suffer and what they stand to gain ... our deterrence system must be reserved for protecting our vital interests, whatever the origin and form of the threat. There is no need to give too specific a definition of these interests, which are subject to interpretation of the most senior officials of state. Nonetheless, in essence, they consist in the free exercise of our sovereignty and the integrity of our national territory, its dependencies, its air space and surrounding waters.

Great Britain has not deemed it necessary to describe its doctrine in such detail. However, in general terms, British strategy is comparable to that of France. In December 1995, at a symposium organised by the Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), Sir Christopher Mallaby, Her Majesty's Ambassador to France, gave a very detailed presentation of Britain's deterrence doctrine.2 He argued that Great Britain will maintain its nuclear force at the minimum level required to act as a deterrent. The nuclear 'button' is the Prime Minister's responsibility and he/she has sole decisionmaking power based on his/her appraisal of the nation's vital interests. Great Britain makes its decision alone; there is no double-key system or right to veto in association with the United States. In both countries, there is a consensus in favour of maintaining a nuclear policy. French public opinion's support for the 'dissuasion' doctrine remains strong: 61 per cent consider that France could not guarantee its defence without the 'force de dissuasion', 28 per cent hold the opposite opinion, 21 per cent feel that it should be strengthened further, and 32 per cent feel that it should be maintained in a state of operational readiness. For 39 per cent the existing strength should be maintained, and 23 per cent feel that it is time to begin reducing it.3

In 1997, within one month of each other, Great Britain and France – on May and 1 June respectively – experienced an electoral move of the political spectrum to the left. This did not, however, alter attitudes towards the nuclear issue. The Labour Party, for its part, had learned its lesson in the 1980s, when its position was seen by public opinion to be too extreme and contributed towards its inability to regain power. Now, however, as far as defence doctrine is concerned, the pacifist path has been abandoned. In its programme entited

Arms Control in the Mediterranean Area

'A Fresh Start for Britain', Labour swears continued allegiance to the prospect of a nuclear-free world, but specifies that disarmament must be a mutual, balanced and verifiable process. Labour is in favour of multilateral disarmament, a radical change since the 1980s when it wanted Great Britain to lead the way on unilateral disarmament.

In France, during the 1995 presidential election campaign, Lionel Jospin's programme included the statement that: 'The nuclear 'force de dissuasion', supported by the submarine fleet, must remain the pillar of our defence system, guaranteeing our independence.' The opposition of the Socialist Party to the renewed nuclear testing was not because it was against deterrence, but rather because it considered that nuclear tests were not essential for France to maintain a deterrence force, and that such action could only serve to arouse public hostility toward nuclear issues. France therefore continues to follow a policy of strictly essential deterrence; of minimal 'dissuasion'.

The joint Green Party-Socialist Party declaration, signed in January 1997, was careful not to call for the renunciation of nuclear weapons, calling instead for action to reduce armaments, to fight against nuclear proliferation and to eliminate weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The electoral alliance of the Socialist Party with two other parties (the Greens and the Communists) hostile to nuclear dissuasion, which is now in government, will not provoke any changes in French strategy. A policy of minimal deterrence (in conjunction with an active policy towards disarmament, as is currently the case) does not harm communist or ecologist sensitivities to the point of preventing them from supporting or even participating in the government. This consensus is made up of four elements:

- the maintenance of a policy of deterrence;
- the rejection of nuclear war;
- the need to create a link between French nuclear power and European defence; and
- the establishment of a link between deterrence and nuclear disarmament.

At the beginning of the 1990s, however, there was a great risk that France would abandon the policy of dissuasion to adopt a combat-oriented nuclear doctrine. It was based on a mixture of fear over nuclear weapons proliferation, combined with the perception of a threat from the South. This launched the debate in France on the possibility of changing the strategic nuclear doctrine. Some argued in favour of a switch from the 'weak to the strong' doctrine to one of the 'strong to the weak', or even the 'strong to the crazy', in the sense that potential adversaries were now seen as inherently weaker than France and also as inherently irrational in their external policy formation. According to

this theory, France's deterrence doctrine, suitable for the East-West context of the cold war, was no longer suitable in a more dynamic strategic environment where the threats took many different forms and were more radical.

After the fall of the Berlin wall, and the Gulf War, the option of using tactical nuclear weapons for purely traditional military purposes was abandoned in favour of the option of miniaturised weapons for surgical strikes. This involved the ability to perform accurate strikes of limited effects on a chosen target without causing environmental damage. The argument was that it was impossible to deter the countries of the South with the same type of threat – heavy strikes on urban areas – which were used against the former Soviet Union. The advantage of developing nuclear weapons with reduced destructive effects would be that it would be easier to use such weapons. The disadvantages, however, were exactly the same as before, namely that nuclear weapons would cease to be simply a deterrence mechanism, acquiring a combat role instead – something that France had always managed to avoid. The need for accurate weapons for surgical strikes must be reserved for conventional weapons alone. Only nuclear weapons can truly dissuade and deter, but that is all they may do.

With the introduction of the policy review leading up to a White Paper on Defence and the associated campaign for renewed nuclear testing, it looked as if those who wished to modify the strategic deterrence concept had won the endless struggle between the two perceptions of the role to be assigned to nuclear weapons. From 1992 to 1994, the call for a move towards 'more flexible' methods of deterrence inexorably gained popularity with politicians on both the right and the left of the political spectrum, and with security experts.6 Nothing came of the iniative however, and the dangerous implications of these theories was finally revealed, particularly with respect to the nuclear testing debate. As a result, the White Paper on Defence, published in February 1994, contained the following passage: 'France has no known adversaries at the present time. Its strategy remains essentially defensive. The rejection of conventional and nuclear conflict which forms the basis for the doctrine of deterrence ('dissuasion') is still its inspiration. It remains one of the keystones of the indispensable national consensus in defence matters'.7 It went on to state, even more clearly, that 'French strategy is one of deterrence, allowing no possible confusion between deterrence and use'.8

The matter was further clarified on 5 May 1994, in a presidential speech on deterrence, when François Mitterrand summed up the issue as follows:

I am opposed to any inter-mixture of pre-strategic and tactical weapons. If we adopted a deterrent system of successive nuclear warning trigges all we would be doing would be to adopt the notion of graduated response. Conversely, if there is only a single and final warning, there

can be no higher level of threat to a potential aggressor, for, after this, comes war ... I would be against any renewed risk of straying from this doctrine – as when I hear it suggested, for example, that we should use nuclear power against the weak or irrational to solve a problem beyond our national territory or our vital interests. Should we come around to the idea of surgical strikes (another term they use is to decapitate the threat) which could go so far as to lead to nuclear warfare?

The president was, in effect, confirming the stand he had taken during the Gulf War. He had, at the time and in accordance with French doctrine, refused to envisage using nuclear weapons in the conflict because neither the French sanctuary or France's vital interests were in danger. Indeed, during the subsequent presidential electoral campaign, the three main candidates supported a traditional vision of 'dissuasion' and there is, therefore, today once again a powerful national consensus in favour of maintaining a purely deterrent role for French nuclear weapons, excluding all possibilities of nuclear war.

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One other country which participates in the Barcelona Process also possesses a nuclear force which is unofficial but widely acknowledged to exist – Israel. Yet, although Israel has never officially admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, thus pursuing a policy which Shimon Peres referred to as 'nuclear tog', its refusal to sign the NPT, which was maintained during the period leading up to the 1995 Extension and Review Conference of the Treaty, was further indication of its nuclear capabilities. It also possesses several ballistic missile carriers for its weapons, as is well-known throughout the region. Indeed, in 1995, Aly Maher El Sayed, the Egyptian ambassador to state currently holds ... more than one hundred nuclear warheads; furthermore it has completed a miniaturisation programme which enables it to make discriminating use of this weapon'.

Estimates of Israel's nuclear power always hover around a capacity of 100-to-200 nuclear weapons. Indeed, according to the revelations made by Mordechai Vanunu – since imprisoned in solitary confinement in Israel – to Ine Sunday Times, Israel has 200 nuclear weapons. Seymour Hersh, the American journalist has subsequently claimed that Israel possesses hundreds of tactical nuclear weapons. Interestingly, it should be noted that the Israeli nuclear programme – the only programme in the region to actually produce weapons, for other programmes have not had any outcomes – is never dentified as a danger by Western powers. It is, of course, true that Israel does

not aim its missiles at countries on the northern banks of the Mediterranean, although, during the cold war, it did target the southern part of the Soviet Union. However, the problem is that it is the existence of the Israeli nuclear arsenal which motivates and justifies other states in creating nuclear programmes in the region.

At Dimona, in the Negev desert, Israel possesses a heavy water research reactor and two uranium enrichment plants, as well as a plutonium reprocessing facility, none of which are covered by International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) guarantees. It also possesses half a dozen uranium processing facilities and a heavy water production plant which are no longer monitored by the IAEA.¹² In addition, Israel has F15, F16 and F4 aircraft capable of launching nuclear weapons and short-range missiles (MGM-51, Lance with a range of 130 km and a load capacity of 450 kg), as well as medium-range missiles Jericho 1 (500 kg, 500 km) and Jericho 2 (100 kg, 1500 km). Israel is also developing cruise missile programmes (200 and 400 km ranges).

In 1995, during negotiations to extend the life of the NPT, many countries, mainly Arab nations led by Egypt, were against extending it indefinitely because Israel continued to refuse to sign the treaty. Israel's stand on the NPT involves not signing it before having signed peace treaties with all Arab states. It would then support the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. However, the fact that Israel possesses nuclear weapons and carriers which enable it to reach all the countries in the region remains the main obstacle to establishing such a zone. ¹³ It seems clear that Israel has no desire to give up its nuclear capabilities, for they are seen as the ultimate way of guaranteeing the existence of the Jewish state. Certainly, recent negative developments in the peace process and the hardening of the Israeli government's attitudes towards it push the prospect of real peace far into the future.

Furthermore, in the absence of any real pressure or threat of sanctions, the Israeli government has no reason to adopt a more open attitude. These nuclear capabilities have always been a major cause of concern for Israel's neighbours. They have never been seriously denounced by Western countries, including those which are most committed to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The attitude of countries outside the area is of capital importance on this matter. Although the United States has always vehemently condemned the unrealised nuclear ambitions of Arab states and Iran (even though the countries have signed the NPT), it has never criticised the Israeli programme which has real substance to it. The disarmament plan for the Near-East presented by President Bush on 29 May 1991, sought to close down nuclear programmes in the region but left Israel's advantage there intact. In December 1993, Frank Wisner, American Under-Secretary of State for Defence, went so

far as to declare that the threats overshadowing the Jewish state justified the fact that the latter retained nuclear weapons, even though his statement contradicted the objective of non-proliferation in the region. At the end of January 1995, John Holum, Director of the ACDA (US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency), indicated that Israel was not subject to significant pressure from America to sign the treaty because, whilst hoping that Israel would sign, the United States was aware of the special situation created by the refusal of several of its neighbours to accept its very existence.¹⁴

In February 1995, the Israeli daily, Ha'aretz, announced that Israel would be prepared to sign the treaty within two years of achieving global peace in the region. This report covered a verbal commitment made in Cairo by Shimon Peres, but it was not subsequently confirmed. The Israeli refusal to sign the NPT is justified by issues not covered by treaty and which can be manipulated to national advantage, as Iraq has demonstrated. These include factors such as such as the relative narrowness of national territory, the constant hostility of some states in the region, the balance of power which would be less favourable to Israel in conventional weapons matters and, finally, the proliferation of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons in the region. Eventually, the NPT was prolonged unconditionally for an indefinite period, but accompanied by a set of principles and objectives, which were not legally binding but were intended to encourage further progress towards disarmament. A resolution, proposed by Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, called upon all countries not to delay signing the treaty, and also called on Middle Eastern countries to set up a zone free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as of delivery means, in the region.

In any case, quite apart from political judgements on the policy of the Netanyahu government over the NPT, it must be noted that the objective situation did not encourage Israel to make concessions. Israel's nuclear monopoly in the Near East was effectively ratified by treaty when its Arab and Muslim neighbours signed the NPT for an unlimited period, 15 thus creating a profound strategic imbalance in the region. This type of imbalance did not exist elsewhere – in the arms control negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States, or between India and Pakistan, or even Argentina and Brazil, for example. Israel's 'nuclear fog' policy however, precluded not only the possibility of setting up a system of arms control, but also the creation of any confidence-building measures, as when Israel refused a team of Egyptians the right to inspect its facilities. Nor were measures which did not affect Israeli nuclear strength but would have provided greater openness, such as public access to data on the number of nuclear weapons, were not permitted either

A confidence-building measure can be defined as any exchange of information or any means for exchanging or allowing for the exchange of

information on military policy and capacity, without necessarily imposing regulatory armament levels. This does not involve arms control measures or disarmament measures which would directly affect the size and level of readiness of arsenals. Confidence-building measures do not affect the existence, the size or expansion of such arsenals, but help to establish a better climate and level of trust which can subsequently lead to disarmament measures. Conversely, unbalanced situations, internal lack of will and lack of external pressure create stalemate.

Regional WMD Capabilities

What is the WMD situation in countries linked to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) area? Iraq is a special case as, until 1998, its WMD capability was closely monitored by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). This monitoring will be the subject of renewed Security Council attempts to revive the UNSCOM system, despite Iraqi opposition, and Iraq will presumably not be able to equip itself with this type of capability in the medium term. All monitoring and control regimes will be based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 (1990). Section C of Resolution 687 requires that Iraq comply unconditionally with the obligations in the 1923 War Protocol. It also requires that Iraq accept that its chemical and biological weapons, weapons research and development facilities, related support and manufacturing facilities, ballistic missiles with a range of more than 150 km and the facilities for repairing and manufacturing them, be destroyed, removed or neutralised under international supervision. Iraq must unconditionally accept not to acquire or develop nuclear weapons or materials which could be used to manufacture them, or their sub-systems and components, or the related research and development or supporting and manufacturing facilities. The original UNSCOM mechanism set up by the United Nations involves three different types of operation: on-site inspection and recording of data; the elimination of materials which could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons and the facilities constructed for this purpos and inspection and control, all at the expense of the Iraqi government.

Iraq is not the only potential culprit, however. Iran has frequently been suspected of wishing to acquire nuclear weapons. However, no proof of an organised programme has ever been found, and IAEA inspections have proceeded normally. Quite apart from alarmist information disseminated by Israeli and American security and information services, which allege that Iran will very soon be in a position to obtain nuclear means, observers estimate that even if Iran had any real intention to develop nuclear weapons, in intention which remains to be proved, it would not be able to do so for at less ten years. As far as delivery systems are concerned, the situation is more

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complex, for Iran had several hundred Scud-B (300 km) and a hundred or so Scud-C (550 km) acquired through North Korea. Reference is sometimes made to the help that China would provide to Iran to develop a 700-to-1000 km range missile. Mention is also made of the many programmes under development with Chinese and North-Korean co-operation (No Dong 1,500 km range, DF 25, 1,700 km range) although no specific date can be given as to when this type of equipment would become operational. On 27 March 1992, the Director of the CIA, Robert Gates, declared before the Armed Forces Committee of the Chamber of Representatives in Congress that the CIA estimated that 'Iran was trying to acquire nuclear military capability'. However, to date, no published proof exists to substantiate this statement.

What would be the real threat of a nuclear Iran? In all likelihood, Iran's main concern would be to protect itself permanently against external attack. Iran may wish to have a nuclear arsenal to protect both its regime and state against external threat without wishing to use such an arsenal to threaten the existing international order. Could the objective of the Iranian regime simply be to deter the Americans, the Iraqis or anyone else from attacking them, without any concomitant vision of hegemony?17 Indeed, could Iran threaten other countries? This is unlikely as far as other nuclear countries and their allies are concerned, although it would be much more worrying for countries which do not possess a deterrent. When the United States attempted to thwart the sale of Russian nuclear power stations to Teheran (ironically enough, the proposed nuclear power stations were the same type as those that the United States itself wished to supply to North Korea) as part of the fight against proliferation, the Russians replied that these power stations did not lead to the bomb and that, in addition, Iran equipped with nuclear weapons did not threaten Russia in the slightest. The latter, happily equipped with its own nuclear forces is in a position to deter even a hint of Iranian aggression.

Iran also approached China to obtain new nuclear power stations but, for financial reasons, this project seems to have been abandoned. Teheran has an experimental reactor provided by the United States to the University of Teheran, as well as four small research reactors from China, two of which are at Esfahan and Kraj. Iran signed the NPT and a guarantee agreement with the IAEA came into force in May 1994. Since then, the IAEA inspectors have not found any proof of a weapons programme and congratulate Iran on its cooperation with the agency, which extends beyond the obligations of the treaty. In June 1997, Iran tested an air-sea missile which caused a flurry of protests from the United States. Although the fact of possessing this type of weapon means that Iran brings to bear more military weight in the Persian Gulf situation, it does not fundamentally alter the regional military balance and cannot be compared with the possession of WMD.

The situation in Libya is a quite different matter, for here perceptions have been allowed to overshadow the objective reality. As one commentator remarked: 'Few issues generate more apprehension in European policy circles than the proliferation of WMD in North Africa, where Libya is the leading regional proliferator'.18 A comparison is often drawn between Colonel Qadhafi's statements denying that Libya possesses WMD and those proffered by Saddam Hussein just before the Gulf War. In essence, Libya is widely suspected of having clandestine chemical weapons manufacturing programmes and of not having abandoned Colonel Qadhafi's long-standing desire to acquire nuclear weapons. In the 1970s, the Libyan leader turned to the Chinese to ask for help in manufacturing a nuclear weapon. Interestingly enough, despite its public stand against the policy of nuclear non-proliferation - which it regarded as the result of the much criticized Soviet-American power condominium - Beijing did not respond to Libya's request, on the basis of the Maoist principle that 'One must be able to rely on one's own strength'. At the beginning of 1992, the international media hinted at a Libyan attempt to corrupt a top-level officer in the Russian Navy, in the hope of obtaining a nuclear weapon. 19 It would, however, be wise to take such claims with a grain of salt, for the media's Libyan nuclear claims more often than not arise from highly inaccurate information. It is difficult to believe that Libya could obtain nuclear weapons in the medium term, not least because the weapons embargo set up by United Nations Security Council Resolution 784 (1992) has considerably weakened the country's access to all kinds of weapons supplies. None the less, Libya does possess short-range missiles (SS-21 70 km, Scud-B 300 km) and medium-range Scud-Cs (550 km). It could also have a 950 km-range Al-Fatah missile under development.

Other countries in the region, such as Syria and Algeria which are seen as potential threats, are also suspected of WMD programmes. It is sometimes claimed that Syria holds bacteriological and chemical weapons. It would be capable of adapting neurotoxic agents to SS-21 (120 km range) and Scud-B (300 km) missiles. It also possesses Scud-C missiles (550 km) and CSS-amissiles (600 km). Algeria caused much worry when it was discovered in 1991 that, with China's help, it was secretly constructing a research reactor. Ain Oussera. Since its discovery, this reactor has been placed under the watchful eye of the IAEA and Algeria has signed the non-proliferation treaty.

Real Risks, Exaggerated Threats

Matters must, however, be kept in proportion. It is hardly going to be possible to make a nuclear weapon in the national equivalent of the garden shed unbeknownst to neighbouring states, with the help of a handful of receipt qualified physicists.²⁰ Besides the requisite scientific knowledge which is, it is

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true, widespread today, and materials which are not as easy to procure on the black market as rumour would have it, the appropriate facilities are needed. In this connection, Iraq is often cited as an example of a country which has signed NPT while secretly continuing a nuclear programme. But, even here, it is important to consider the whole picture. Iraq spent colossal sums of money over ten years (equivalent to those spent by France on the Atomic Energy Commission's Military Applications Directorate), and employed 10,000 highly-qualified technicians from all fields within the nuclear industry, without ever actually being able to develop an atomic weapon. This experience demonstrates that, to succeed in such an endeavour, whilst absolute national priority must be given to the acquisition of nuclear capability, abundant financial resources and a sound technological basis are also essential – two factors which are not necessarily interrelated. The list of countries which meet all three conditions is much shorter than alarmist scenarios imply.

In short, a more accurate assessment of the risk environment would be that, 'For the moment, however, the most pressing war risks are south-south, and neighbours are the most likely first victims of war'. The main risk is, in fact, that 'aggressive sanctuaries' do emerge. A country like Iran or Iraq would not threaten the European countries or the United States. However, the danger of threat articulation would be paramount for their less powerful neighbours who could not count on international help. It is clear that the outcome of the Kuwait crisis and of the subsequent Gulf War in 1990–91 would have been quite different had Saddam Hussein possessed nuclear weapons. In this case, the United Nations would have certainly condemned his acts as vigorously as it did at the time, but Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm which led to the Second Gulf War and the victory of the anti-

This is not to suggest that proliferation is desirable, or that it would not have any effect on the state of international security. The arrival of a new country within the nuclear club would be a catastrophe in the eyes of the international community. From an objective standpoint, increased even lead to preventive raids to destroy the proliferator's nuclear facilities, an action which could easily introduce a cycle of conflict in which the major defined but the scars of these wars would disfigure the face of the world for a long ago as 1968, Pierre Hassner commented that 'Nuclear weapons seem to desire for self-sufficiency; they seem to discourage offensive nationalism that involves conquest and expansionism'.

The Barcelona Process

Country		Type of missile	Range	Current state
Egypt Iran	Scud-100 Badr 200/Vector Scud-C	ballistic missile ballistic missile ballistic missile	600 km 850/1,000 km 600 km	under development eliminated in service
Iran	Tondar-68 Fahd al-Hussein al-Abbas Badr 2000/Condor 2 al-Abed (Tammuz 1) Jericho 1 (YA-1) Jericho 2 (YA-3) Shavit al-Fatah Scud-C	ballistic missile ballistic missile ballistic missile ballistic missile ballistic missile	under development banned by UN	
Iraq				0 km banned by UN 0 km banned by UN 0 km banned by UN 00 km banned by UN 00 km banned by UN 0 km in Service 150 km in service 00 km in service
Israel Libya Syria		ballistic missile	900 km 2000 km	
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		ballistic missile	7500 km 950 km	
		ballistic missile ballistic missile	600 km ii	in service on order
	M-9	ballistic missile		Oll Older

Yet nuclear weapons or WMD alone are not enough; they must be delivered to their targets. What is the situation as far as weapons platforms are concerned? As regards carriers with a range of more than 500 km, the table below describes the situation for those countries which officially have no nuclear capacity. In essence, the monitoring of their weapons programmes has shown that around half-a-dozen countries south of the Mediterranean have ballistic capabilities. Naturally, this should be taken into account by European countries in evaluating the threats they may face, but the danger should certainly not be overestimated.

In the Western world, the proliferation of missiles is considered to be a means, given to the countries in the South, of striking right to the heart of the developed nations. More than 25 countries in the developing world now have ballistic missiles in their possession. In response to this development and to prevent further proliferation, developed countries have evolved an export control system, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Yet, such proliferation is more often associated with the logic of regional rivalry than with a confrontation between North and South. If that is the case, although t is necessary to maintain a non-proliferation regime because prevention always better than cure, constructing costly anti-missile defence systems, of the kind now being suggested to Europe by the United States, could be seen to be doubly unnecessary from a strategic point of view in two respects. Firstly, the threat of retaliation hanging over the potential aggressor will always be a greater guarantee than that of potential protection which is not necessarily going to function effectively and, secondly, the ballistic missile threat is often exaggerated.

William Perry, the American Secretary of Defence, declared before the Congress that the threat of ballistic missiles developed by Iraq, Iran and Libya

would not arise for another ten years and he did not, therefore, see the need to rapidly develop new anti-missile systems.23 In fact, at present, the ballistic missiles of the developing world do not constitute a real strategic threat. If all the weapons available were taken into consideration, they would represent three-to four-hundred missiles in total, most of them being Scud-B or Scud-C in type, with a range of 500 km. This is nothing compared to the four thousand V2 rockets that Nazi Germany launched against Great Britain without changing the course of the Second World War. The problem is, above all, psychological in nature. These missiles are more intimidating than any other kind of weapon, mainly because we are afraid of them, for popular perceptions overshadow reality. This is a common problem in threat perception. For example, the wave of terrorism which hit France in 1998 was spectacular but the number of fatalities and people injured as a result of it was minimal, compared to the losses caused by road accidents. It is true that subjective views, at certain times, create objective realities. However, it would be wise not to engage in self-fulfilling prophesies which help to exaggerate the danger. Those who most vehemently denounce a threat can end up helping to create it as a result of the fears they raise.

Regrettably, European states and now the United States have engaged in precisely this kind of exaggeration. On 20 February 1995 in Bonn, the United States, France, Germany and Italy signed a declaration of common intent to develop a ground-to-air defence system to replace the Hawk and Patriot systems. The MEADS project (Medium Extended Air Defence System) involved a missile with a range of 100 km, for a total investment of \$40 billion (50 per cent from America, 20 per cent from France and Germany and 10 per cent from Italy). The aim was to provide defence against relatively primitive ballistic missiles by protecting either externally deployed military equipment, or national territory or, more exactly certain zones within it. On 6 September 1995 in a speech to the Institut des Hautes Etudes de la Défense Nationale, Alain Juppé declared that 'We now have less protection, particularly as regards more distant battlefields and the protection of national territory. We can justify the acquisition of antimissile systems for any theatre of operations to remedy this situation There is nothing to indicate that new [nuclear] states would adopt a deterrence doctrine in nuclear matters'.

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Yet, despite this alarmist talk, in 1997, France was to declare its withdrawal from the project. It has also, in common with its European partners this time, maintained its distance from American pressure for Europe to sign up to the proposed theatre-defence missile shield system that the United States decided to develop at the dawn of the new millennium. In teality, the 'South-South' risk is, in fact, much greater than the 'South-North' nick. The Middle East has long borne the threat of missile attacks. Ground-to-ground missiles were used during the Iran-Iraq war, the 1991 Gulf War and

against Israel in 1973. During the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq launched 331 surface-to-surface Scud and modified Scud missiles against Iranian towns, and Iran responded by launching 86 missiles of the same type, together with 253 ground-to-ground Oghab missiles of a much shorter range (40 km).²⁴

The problem of chemical weapons continues, however, to constitute a genuine element of concern within the overall regional strategic situation. It has acquired substance, largely as a result of Iraqi action, firstly against Iran, then against its own Kurdish population. Furthermore, the fear of Iraqi then against its own Kurdish population. Furthermore, the fear of Iraqi then against its own Kurdish population. Furthermore, the fear of Iraqi then against its own Kurdish population. Furthermore, the fear of Iraqi then against its own Kurdish population. Furthermore, the fear of Iraqi then against that the intentions in this regard during the Second Gulf War has meant that the intentions in this regard during the Second Gulf War has meant that the intentions in this regard during the region which possess chemical Aliboni has pointed out, 'The countries in the region which possess chemical weapons and are capable of manufacturing them are Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Syria and maybe Libya'. However, none of these countries has officially declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated by declared its possession of such weapons and the problem is complicated.

None the less, the link thus established between nuclear weapons and chemical weapons should cause some astonishment, for chemical weapons are not deterrent in nature, but are weapons intended for use. However, Arab countries clearly prefer to retain the chemical option, which is within their financial and technical reach, than the nuclear option, which often is not. Furthermore, such weapons are subject to less adverse pressure from the major powers, for chemical weapons, unlike nuclear weapons, are not directly associated with hegemony within the global hierarchy. The situation is currently that the agreement banning chemical weapons – which bans not only the use of these weapons (as did the Geneva protocol of 1923) but also their development, production and possession – was signed on 18 January 1993 in Paris and came into force in 1997, once it had been ratified by sixty countries. All the signatories undertook to destroy their chemical capabilities under international supervision.

The situation in the Middle East, however, is still profoundly unsatisfactory as far as these new treaty obligations are concerned, largely because of the tensions over Israel's nuclear capacity and because of the South-South chemical weapons threat as a result. All the countries in the strategic zone of the Mediterranean and the Middle East had signed the 1923 Geneva Protocol, although some of them have subsequently been accused using chemical weapons. As far as the 1993 Treaty of Paris is concerned, was signed but not ratified by Cyprus, Israel, Malta, Portugal, Somalia Turkey and Iran. It was not signed by Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Lebanor Iran is suspected of having produced mustard gas, chlorine and of having

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nerve gas capabilities. The Iranian stockpile of chemical weapons is estimated at 2,000 tons. ²⁶ Libya is suspected of having constructed a chemical weapons factory near Rabat although Tripoli claims that this installation is a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant.

Strategic Debate and Mistaken Perspectives

Quite apart from the bilateral and multilateral Arab-Israeli strategic issues, it is clear that the notion of military balance is meaningless within the Mediterranean and Middle East region. The players differ too greatly between the North and the South, rigid or permanent coalitions do not exist and threat situations constantly change. It is extremely difficult to establish a balance of power between the countries along the southern shores of the Mediterranean. It is impossible to implement conflict prevention systems and models which were suitable for the European strategic theatre where the quest for balance was the priority of military and political leaders alike during the cold war from 1945 to 1991.

This fundamental imbalance between the North and South Mediterranean regions is not exclusively due to mutual fear. In reality, because of their military superiority, the countries in the North fuel the fears of those in the South. Even despite the increasingly marked reluctance of European countries to engage in external military operations²⁷ - the experiences of Bosnia and Kosovo not withstanding - the countries of the South fear military intervention which would cost them their sovereignty. In both cases, perceptions and subjective fears are much stronger than actual threats, but subjective perceptions, when they are too strong, can create objective tensions. Europe, indeed, is as prone to this error of judgement as are the countries of the Southern Mediterranean region. Thus, certain Western European 'experts' maintain the myth of a southern threat, thus conveniently replacing the Soviet threat which disappeared with perestroika and the fall of the Berlin wall. In short, cold war orphans have found a substitute adversary in order to justify their desired level of military spending. In an outstanding essay, Jean-Christophe Rufin criticised the situation as follows:

The South! here is the new threat ... articles, television and radio broadcasting, as well as books, announce and celebrate it and we pretend to have just discovered it. The confrontation between East and West is over. Confrontation between North and South arrives instead. Such symmetry is delightful to behold. Officers are painting their armour the colour of sand, aiming their missiles southwards and are studying the theory of the deterrence by the strong against the weak.²⁸

François Cailleteau has pointed out that, 'The historical background to this proach – in particular for the French – is clear: it is a combination of the

Arab invasion of the 8th century and the Algerian War. The sociological background is equally clear: fear of demographic submersion and Islamic fanaticism'.29 In 1995 Willy Claes, then Secretary General of NATO, made the unfortunate claim that 'Islamic fundamentalism is as dangerous as communism once was ... NATO can help to counteract the threat of Islamic extremism because it is much more than just a military alliance'.30 It was a statement that cost him his job, but he voiced the views of an increasingly significant political class. Yet, is it really necessary to take the idea of a Southern threat seriously? Almost certainly this is not the case, for several reasons - including basic common sense, insofar as singling out a possible adversary in advance helps to create it. Stirring up the spectre of this threat in the Western world strengthens the conviction in the Arab and Muslim countries that no sustainable and equitable agreement is possible with the West. Furthermore, no meaningful comparison can be made between the South and the East. The Warsaw Pact was a perfectly cohesive and integrated system, being entirely controlled by the Soviet Union which provided 80 per cent of its military resources. In contrast, the Arab world is fragmented, and no one country seems to be in a position to assume leadership. The South is more intent on declaring war on itself, than on turning its attention to the West - and even if it wanted to, it is not in a position to do so. The difference in military strength between it and the West is considerable and is not likely to be reduced in the near future, even if certain Southern countries do equip themselves with ballistic missile resources. From this point of view, the Europeans have no need to fear, even if financial difficulties weigh heavily on military spending both north and south of the Mediterranean. Who are more suited to wield a threat: countries which, by draining a poor economy, could obtain the means to damage others, or those who today possess all the necessary means of retaliation, from naval blockade to nuclear annihilation, not to mention conventional bombs?

In any case, the term 'the South' is, in fact, used to designate only a small part of the developing world. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is not included and it is really only the Arab and Muslim countries that are involved even though, for the sake of prudence or through cowardice, those who favour this theory prefer to use the imprecise general term. But even if only the Islamic countries are involved, the South is much less uniform than is often implied. It is hard to imagine Algeria and Morocco joining forces against France. It must not be forgotten that Turkey is a particularly loyal member NATO. It is difficult to see what motivation Indonesia (the most highly populated Muslim country in the world) might have for joining forces we Iran to combat the West! This type of anathema pronounced against Muslim and Arab worlds will, in fact, only serve to strengthen them conviction that no equitable agreement is possible with the West and this, in

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turn, can only weaken the position of those – the majority at present – who promote openness and dialogue. This is, in short, the real danger of arguments of the kind put forward by Samuel Huntington in 1993 and which continues to cause repercussions in North–South relations.

In his article and in a later book, Samuel Huntington argued that a conflict between civilizations would be the last phase of the evolution of conflict in the modern world.31 In the western world after the treaty of Westphalia, conflicts had been between princes, kings and emperors. After the French revolution they were between nations. In the twentieth century they were between ideologies (communism, national socialism and liberal democracy). The two world wars and the cold war were Western 'civil wars'. Today, in Huntington's view, is the era of the clash of civilizations. A civilization he defined as a cultural identity, which is defined both by objective elements language, religion, history, customs and institutions - and by a subjective element - people identify with it. A civilization can cover several nations or one alone, as is the case with Japan. It can include many related civilizations, such as western civilization in Europe and North America, or Islamic civilisation with the Arabs, the Turks and Asiatic Muslims. Huntington defines eight distinct civilisations: Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavorthodox, Latin American and African. He states that the differences between these civilizations, developed over several centuries, are fundamental, will not disappear overnight and are more dangerous than ideological clashes, because they do not allow for choice of identity - the question is no longer 'who are you for?' but 'who are you?'

Huntington predicts that the central axis of world politics will be the clash between the West and the rest of the world. While the objective of the cold war was to establish a stable strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, the objective now is to prevent non-western civilizations developing their military capabilities. He identifies a Confucian-Islamic connection, characterized by the export of North Korean and Chinese military equipment to Arab and Muslim countries, such as Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Iran and Syria, so they can obtain the technology required to redress the current balance of power with the West. The rational and thoughtful observer of international affairs should be beware of apparently enticing intellectual analyses, such as Huntington's. First, it should be noted that his prophesy does not correspond to contemporary reality and can lead to some bizarre conclusions. Paradoxically, for example, he could be accused of interpreting the Gulf War in the same way as Saddam Hussein who also saw his conflict with the Multinational Coalition as a war between civilizations,. Yet, the alliances involved were of a different nature entirely, as they involved both the West and the Arab world. Similarly, sales of Western weapons to Arab nations (greater in quantity than those from the People's Republic of

China and North Korea), should, according to Huntington, be interpreted as an 'Islamic-Christian bond'. In reality, in both cases they have nothing to do with civilisational problems but everything to do with commercial, strategic and industrial interests.

Huntington's thesis is merely an intellectually more sophisticated version of the theory of the Southern threat, and is victim of the same fundamental error of analysis – it does not correspond to reality, for most contemporary conflicts are now intra-state, not inter-state in nature. The thirty or so contemporary conflicts are civil wars involving populations and ethnic groups which may differ from each other, but which, generally speaking, belong to which may differ from each other, but which, generally speaking, belong to the same civilization. In any case, ultimately, Huntington's thesis has a disturbing deterministic streak, because it evokes a predestined history of unavoidable and eternal conflict. He also forgets that there is not *one* Islam, but many, as the war between Iraqi Arabs and Iranian Persians illustrated perfectly during the First Gulf War. Islam is multi-faceted between Shi'i and Sunni, each faction being divided into smaller groups, and also consists of different cultural sub-blocks, such as Turks, Arabs, Persians and Asiatic Muslims.

In a similar fashion, the thesis which argues for the essential irrationality of the leaders of countries in the South, has been used to justify the claim that the rules of deterrence which apply to countries in the North, will not apply in the South. This argument, which was even put forward in the 1960s to condition relations between France and China, is hardly more convincing than Huntington's thesis. It is based on a confusion of values with rationality. Iraq's Saddam Hussein or the Iranian leadership almost certainly have different values to Western leaders but they are not candidates for suicide! They can make mistakes in interpretation or analysis, as Saddam Hussain did in invading Kuwait – but, after all, America's President Kennedy and the Soviet Union's Leonid Brejnev made the same type of mistake in Vietnam and Afghanistan respectively – but he was able to avoid overstepping the point which his authority and his regime would have been called into question.

The ideas encapsulated in slogans such as the Southern threat, the clash of civilisations, deterrence by the strong against the weak are essentially vague and dangerous theories sharing the common fault in analysis that arises from insufficient familiarity with national perceptions and strategic realities. One of the most useful confidence-building measures that could be implemented in the Mediterranean region would almost certainly be that of creating a joint strategic observatory or analysis centre for the countries of the area, where each country could establish how the threats are perceived and listen to and understand the analyses of its partners. It would be extremely useful to accurately understand reality in order to reduce the power of the imagination which could otherwise lead to real conflict. Indeed, it is astonishing for the

Arms Control in the Mediterranean Area

impartial observer to note the current discrepancy between mutual, subjective and fearful perceptions of threats between the southern and northern banks of the Mediterranean, whilst being aware of the objective reality that there is no situation of conflict. It is worth repeating the point, made above, that the problem is that at some point, subjective fears, even if they have no objective foundation, can lead to real conflict. It would be interesting, for example, to examine Arab and Israeli views on this subject, for they should have extensive experience of it. Indeed, such an exercise might also illuminate their own vision of the threats they mutually and individually face and thus help to mitigate their head-to-head confrontation!

NOTES

- 1. Livre blanc sur la Défense, Paris: La Documentation française, 1994, p.82.
- 2. See 'Dissuasion britannique et dissuasion européenne', Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, 21, Spring 1996, pp.112-16. 3. Survey by Sofres, May 1996.
- 4. Pascal Boniface, Repenser la Dissuasion nucléaire, Paris, Editions de l'Aube, 1997, p.214.
- 5. 'Until now restricted to major anti-urban strategy, French doctrine has to change in favour of more selective capabilities directed against specific military forces or sensitive facilities. To do this, it must provide more accurate resources, difficult to intercept, very mobile and with reduced collateral effects'. Advice No.583 on the Finance Bill for 1994 (tome IV: Défense, Dissuasion Nucléaire) provided by the Right Hon. Jacques Baumel (Rassemblement pour la Republicain) on behalf of the Committee for National Defence and Armed Forces,
- 6. Pascal Boniface, Contre le révisionnisme nucléaire, Paris: Ellipses, 1994, p.126.
- 7. Livre blanc sur la Défense, op. cit., p.49.
- 8. Ibid., p.54

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- 9. Quoted in Shai Feldman, 'L'extension du TNP et la maîtrise des armements nucléaires au Moyen-Orient', Politique étrangère, 3, 1995, p.616.
- 10. 'Revealed the Secrets of Israel's Nuclear Arsenal', The Sunday Times, London, 5 Oct. 1986.
- 11. The Samson Option, New York: Random House, 1991.
- 12. Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems, Couldson, UK: Jane's Information Group, Sept. 1996.
- 13. An Israeli analyst presented the capabilities of his country as a factor for peace which would not pose any problem to Arab nations. Avner Cohen, 'The Nuclear Issue in the Middle East', Contemporary Security Policy, 16/1, April 1995, p.53: 'Some Arabs, especially Palestinians, even perceive the Israeli undeclared nuclear deterrence as playing a positive and stabilising role in promoting the cause of Arab-Israeli peace, giving Israel the courage to make painful territorial concessions from a position of strength while knowing that it faced no existential threat'. 14. Feldman, op. cit., p.613.
- 15. Even though the unlimited extension of the non-proliferation treaty which took place in 1995 forbade the participating states to make use of the withdrawal clause in Article X, there is no doubt that, from the point of view of the Arab and Muslim countries of the Near and Middle East, the existence of Israel's nuclear capability would be considered as an event justifying
- 16. Joseph Cirincione, Frank Von Hippel, Ballistic Missile Defences on Perspectives, Briefing paper No.9, Brussels: ISIS-Europe, Jan. 1997, p.2.
- 7. Shahram Chubin, 'Does Iran want Nuclear Weapons?', Survival, Spring 1995, pp.86-104.
- 18. Robert Waller, 'The Libyan Threat to the Mediterranean', Jane's Intelligence Review, 8/7,

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20. Contrary to the claims of Jacques Attali for whom 'manufacturing a basic nuclear weapon is now within the grasp of any sophisticated country, or even non-state groups': Economie de l'apocalypse, Paris: Fayard, 1996, pp.37-8. 21. Ian O. Lesser and Ashley J. Tellis, Proliferation Around the Mediterranean, Santa Monica,

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- 22. Pierre Hassner, La Violence et la paix. De la bombe atomique au nettoyage ethnique, Paris: édition Esprit, 1995, p.121.
- 23. 'Perry Disputes Congress on Missile Fear', International Herald Tribune, 15 Feb. 1995.
- 24. IRIS, L'Année Stratégique-Les Equilibres militaires, Paris: IRIS-arléa, 1996, p.592. 25. Roberto Aliboni, La sécurité européenne à travers la Méditerranée (Cahiers de Chaillot,
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- 28. Jean-Christophe Rufin, L'Empire et les nouveaux barbares, Paris: Editions Jean-Claude
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- 31. 'The Clash of Civilizations?', Foreign Affairs, 72/3, Summer 1993, pp.22-49.