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East-West to North-South in the Mediterranean

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ABSTRACT: The onset of modern history in the sixteenth century coincided with the peaking of the Christian-Islamic East-West confrontation in the Mediterranean and, concurrently, a North-South struggle within Europe. The resulting ascendancy of the innovative North resulted in the subjugation of the old Mediterranean power bases and of the whole region. As the Mediterranean slid into underdevelopment, it became in due course the contesting ground of the Great Powers, whose world interests coincided or clashed with regional interests, while more and more of the region's territory fell under external domination. During the cold war era in particular, the Mediterranean returned to be a major theatre of confrontation between the powers of East and West, that contest intersecting with a widening divide between North and South. The end of the East-West contest has exposed the North-South gulf, and its potential for adversity, for what it is. Does the end of one divide promise to help heal the other, or simply to entrench it further?

No region of the world as much as the Mediterranean can claim to have experienced, often been the main theatre of, the great divides of history. Once considered the centre of the world, if not the world itself, this sea and its littoral lost its centrality in international affairs after the onset of "modern history" when, from being the central theatre of the Christian-Islamic East-West contest, it became engaged in a losing contest with the North. Subdued, it eventually resumed its importance once the new northern European powers had asserted themselves and proceeded to vie with one another for its domination and control. Returning to be the contesting ground of world powers from East and West, the Mediterranean assumed the character of a geostrategic region. The reverse side of the specificity attached by such powers to the Mediterranean is the regional fragmentation induced by the same competing external powers and the unequal development of its component parts. Today, rapid changes in international relations following the end of the East-West contest appear to highlight the division between North and South. Whether this divide within the Mediterranean is set to deepen further or to progress towards its re-integration as a region seems to depend on how truly revolutionary the current changes turn out to be.

Superpowers of Christianity and Islam

Fernand Braudel can still speak of the Mediterranean *world* for the sixteenth century – as it were, the last fling of the region at being the centre of the world – and insist on the 'unity and coherence of the Mediterranean regions' despite the East-West contest raging within it (Braudel 1972: 14, 134–38). A veritable East-West divide ran right along the middle of the Mediterranean, peaking in this period following centuries of holy war and crusades between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Two great Mediterranean empires, superpowers by the standards of the times, stood for two religions cum ideologies that underpinned the confrontation between them. Two fleets were commissioned for the domination of the sea, or in readiness for the big confrontation that both hoped might be avoided. In the West lay the Spanish empire, reaching its zenith when Holy Roman Emperor Charles V combined in his person the rule over the possessions of both the Austrian and Spanish house of Habsburg. No less intent on pursuing the confrontation between East and West was his successor Philip II, though his dominions were again restricted to Spain and its possessions. In the East lay the Ottoman empire under Suleiman the Magnificent, sprawling over the Balkan peninsula, Asia Minor and most of the Arab world.

By and large the confrontation by this time had assumed the nature of a cold war, which both sides craved to win, but neither seemed keen on forcing. In the two main deployments of the fleets – the siege of Malta of 1565 and the battle of Lepanto of 1571 – both sides displayed their inadequacy in the moment of truth. In 1565 the Spanish fleet did not seek out to destroy the Ottoman fleet anchored in Malta, 800 hundred miles (1500 km) away

from base, while the Turkish forces failed to take the island. And in 1571, when Christendom pooled its naval resources to descend upon and destroy the Ottoman fleet, the Christians did not know what to do next and proceeded to return home leaving Cyprus, the *casus belli*, in Ottoman hands.

These episodes, combined with such developments as the persecution and eventual expulsion of the Morisco population from Spain or the expulsion of Christian garrisons from their remaining outposts in North Africa, further affirmed and tidied the frontier between East and West. To all intents and purposes, that particular East-West conflict had stabilised by the later part of the sixteenth century and both the western and eastern empires were set to decline, in direct relation to the rise of northwestern Europe. A North-South contest emerged to replace the riparian one between East and West as the outstanding feature of international relations. If the Mediterranean's "unity and coherence" survived the worst of the East-West political contest, in the long run it did not survive that between North and South, and the way was open to fragmentation and underdevelopment.

The very abandonment of the war with Turkey in the Mediterranean was in no small measure motivated by Spain's growing concern with problems and interests to her North and West, up and away from the Mediterranean. But Spain could not for long hold on to the rebellious Dutch provinces, nor to hold its own against the rising sea power of England, nor to sustain the pressure from France that in the course of the seventeenth century reduced it to a second rate power, turning it by 1713 into a surrogate of France and in the process denuded of its imperial possessions in Europe. Nor in the longer run was Spain able to hold on to the American empire that it proved incapable of even exploiting with effect. Up and away from the Mediterranean also looked Constantinople. After distracting itself with renewed warfare eastwards against Persia and towards the Indian Ocean, and making some more inroads into the Hungarian possessions of the Austrian Habsburgs, the Ottoman empire settled down to an interminable agony of decay, eaten up by restlessness among its subjects, by underdevelopment, and by foreign pressure from Austria and especially Russia, and ultimately depending for its continued existence on the protection first of France and later of Britain.[1)]

The New International Order and the Vertical Hierarchy of Power

The background and framework respectively of this directional shift were the coming into being of the capitalist world-economy and the concomitant new international order. The western empire succumbed earlier than the eastern to the pressures from the North. Overall, this can be accounted for by the thesis that the assault on the power and pretensions of the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs was a contest to dominate the new world-economy, whose core was the North and West of Europe, whereas for the time being the Ottoman empire was an autonomous sytem in itself (Wallerstein 1779: 1-36). In political terms it is explained by the expediency of the alliance between France and the Ottoman empire to deal with their common Habsburg enemies; and by the late-coming of Russia. In the long run, the Ottoman empire would be assailed by Austria and Russia from the northeast; by France from the southwest.

Hence, the North-South conflict was in the first instance a contest within Europe, the ascendancy of the North becoming established in the course of the seventeenth century. While intra-European North-South tension corresponded with the abandonment of the crusade against the Muslim East, the resolution of the contest within the Christian world eventually released Europe to move in for the conquest of the Muslim empire in the second instance. During the long agony of the Ottoman empire, the one-time horizontal Christian-Muslim divide was stood vertically to become the Christian conquest of the Muslim and Muslim-controlled southern arc, from the Balkans to the Maghreb.

Externally, the European order that was emerging in the sixteenth century was rendering the Mediterranean empires' "superpower" status as anachronistic as their religious-ideological war aims. The assertion of the principle of balance of power signalled a new international order reflecting the emergence of nation states and the demise of the traditional imperial hegemonistic order. In due course therefore it transpired that the real threat to the respective empires came not so much from each other as from the modernising if nonetheless expansionist forces to their respective norths. Since the balance of power principle implied a Europe made up of several states of comparable power and relied therefore on the ability of consolidated nation-states to check the inordinate power of the traditional dynastic empires, the new international order was inseparable from the emerging North-South divide and the growing irrelevance of the East-West contest. The new international order reflected the visions of successful states and was appealed to to consolidate and promote their achievements. The prowess of the North in comparison with the Mediterranean manifested itself in the consolidation of the modernising nation-state, in success in manifacture and commerce, in the assertion of the middle class, in new internal political structures. The international political shifts unfolding in sixteenth century Europe are both cause and effect of changes taking place - or refusing to take place - within individual states.

Internally, both Mediterranean empires bore within them the seeds of their own destruction even as they still posed as superpowers, and on account of that: over-extension and the cost of war, fossilised and top-heavy socio-political structures based on privilege and on the subjugation and exploitation of their subjects' enterprise and resources - on the whole an anti-national community at the convenience of the anti-productive state rather than a nation-state at the service of the productive

community. While the apparatus of empire shielded the traditional centres of power in the south from the great economic, social and political changes taking place further North, the South became reactionary. Perhaps nothing expresses it better than the successful revolt of the enterprising Netherlands against predatory Spain in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

The contemporary coming into being of the "world-economy" and the competition between the established powers, notably Spain of Charles V, and the new challengers for the greater share, if not control, of it found the latter better equipped than the former. By the time that, in the seventeenth century, the political ascendancy of the North began to be visible, northern powers like England and the United Provinces had established themselves as "core states", relegating Spain and the traditional trading centres in Italy to the "semi-periphery" within the international economic hierachy (Wallerstein 1979: 38). From the North Atlantic, the English and the Dutch descended into the Mediterranean and captured the lion's share of its trade, enhancing their own economic development in direct proportion to the economic decline they helped to accelerate in the Mediterranean (Rapp 1975).[2] In short, as the Mediterranean powers slid behind, the northern powers turned their eyes to dominate it, for commercial, territorial and strategic purposes.

The emerging ascendancy of the North over the South was of course a long drawn out process more discernible in historical retrospect than to the contemporary eyes which contemplated the "golden age" of Spain under Philip II or the "magnificence" and seemingly irresistible expansion of Ottoman power under Suleiman II. But the symptoms were there already in the early decades of the sixteenth century. In the context of the Habsburg-Valois struggle, Francis I of France was severing the balance of power not only in resisting the hegemonistic drive of Charles V, but also in striking alliances with the Ottoman Porte. The enduring formation of two intersecting axes, the Spanish-Austrian and the French-Ottoman, was in itself a sign that the Christian-Islamic contest - even as it appeared to be the driving force behind the East-West confrontation in the Mediterranean - was abhorrent to the new international order, because the Christian world itself was gripped by a contradiction between economic and political power.

Indicative of the new order was rather the Christian-Christian contest inaugurated by the Protestant Reformation which, though running concurrently with the Christian-Islamic East-West contest, superseded it as the religious-ideological contest par excellence. Catching on in the North of Europe in rebellious defiance of the traditional power-bases of the South, no movement depicts more graphically the growing divide between the innovative North and the conservative South, where the Counter- Reformation held sway. In particular, in both the short and the long run, the power of the Catholic Habsburg was first contained and then cut to a managable size. Though in different ways and on different time-scales, both the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburg empires were in the first place reduced within the context of the complex warfare between Catholics and Protestants, a befitting outcome for empires where religious and political hegemony were both the means and the end to each other.

The vicissitudes of Austria best depict the reversed direction of the hierarchy of power in Europe. With the new international order denoting a diplomatic rebellion against the ascendancy of the Holy Roman Emperors, Austrian pretensions to its North were defeated in stages, whereas new opportunities for expansion opened up to its South. Between the Treaty of Augsburg (1555) and the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) Austrian hopes to unite and rule over Germany were smashed. Two centuries later her exclusion from a Germany about to be united was sealed at Sadowa/Königgrätz (1866). On the other hand, Austria was a decided beneficiary from the decline of the two one-time great Mediterranean empires, respectively her friend and foe. At Carlowitz (1699) Austria recovered Hungary from Turkey and at Utrecht (1713) she inherited most of Spain's Italian possessions, as well as the Spanish Netherlands. Her expulsion from Italy and exclusion from Germany in the nineteenth century further reinforced the southeastward thrust of her ambitions, bringing it into perilious competition with another eastern empire, Russia. In the long run, the anti-national Austrian empire survived as long as is did, as an anachronistic relic of a different historical era, because its existence was convenient for that same balance of power it once negated. In this respect, its condition was similar to that of the Ottoamn empire itself. Both died a violent death in 1918, but then, the balance of power principle was utterly discredited anyway and the victorious powers were once again groping for a new international order.

For a long time yet, however, France would be Austria's counterpart both on the continent and in the Mediterranean. Having spearheaded the break-down of the inordinate power of the Habsburgs, the Valois and the Bourbons' own bid for hegemony in its turn encountered the collective resistence of the other powers, who redressed the balance notably at Utrecht (1713), Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) and Vienna (1815). In the Mediterranean, Austria's kinship with Spain and hostility to Turkey led to its inheriting territory from the former and reconquer it from the latter. France, on the other hand, by hostility and subjugation in Spain, and by friendship, influence, capitulations and ultimately conquest in the Ottoman empire, became pretender to the mastery of the Mediterranean. Due to checks in continental Europe and possibilities in the Mediterranean, the expansionist orientation of these adverse heirs of adverse empires - France and Austria - became increasingly Mediterranean. For that way lay weakness and the opportunity for conquest. Legitimately as much European as Mediterranean, they were two in the four-power equation that emerged in the nineteenth century struggle for mastery in the Mediterranean. Peripherally European and not Mediterranean, the other two were Britain and Russia.

The decline and subjugation of the Mediterranean, incipient in the sixteenth century, matured in the course of the seventeenth. By the early eighteenth century, the Mediterranean lay exhausted. The bounty of Mediterranean commerce that had so attracted the attention of the North, was on one hand superseded by the promise of commercial pastures and empire further overseas, on the other emaciated by aggressive external competition and by prolonged warfare and its after effects. Besides its intrinsic ruinous nature, warfare promoted another scourge, corsairing, to Mediterranean communications and commerce. As much a sypmtom as an abettor of decline, corsairing was no new phenomenon to the Mediterranean, and under some aspects was the tail end of the Christian-Islamic war. But the facility of corsairs to operate within a context of chronic warfare gave a new lease of life to this form of terrorism, enabling it to linger on for another century.[3] Persisting into the nineteenth century it ultimately provided, in the form of punitive expeditions, a good subterfuge for the European penetration of North Africa. In the tradition of the Christian-Islamic contest, where Christianity had failed as a western force to subdue Islam, it succeeded as a northern, colonial, force.

Atlantic Britain, Europe's "Southern Flank" and "Containment"

Very significantly, the prominent featuring of the Mediterranean in essentially European warfare and the determining role of sea-power to such wars had other far-reaching effects on the region's place within a world whose parameters had grown very large since the Mediterranean last occupied the central place in it. For just as the Inland Sea was beginning to look like a backwater by dint of losing its vitality, it was also assuming a new function - and importance - precisely in the conduct of those wars which hastened its eclipse and fostered its underdevelopment. The function of Europe's southern flank unfolded in particular during the wars against France, notably the Wars of the Spanish Succession and those of the Austrian Succession during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Not surprisingly, it was chiefly to the rising sea power of Britain, a North Atlantic power, that it appealed. Britain had earlier entered the Mediterranean for commerce: now it stayed on to dominate it for strategic reasons. The function that Britain gave the Mediterranean, in relation to southern Europe in the first place, was eventually extended in relation to the other hinterlands beyond the Mediterranean coast, notably the Balkans, Western Asia and East Africa. Britain was the first of the modern great powers to view the Mediterranean as a single geostrategic unit. Having given up Tangier in 1684 after holding it for just over twenty years, Britain captured Gibraltar and Minorca in 1704 and 1708, during the Spanish Succession Wars. From here onwards, Britain installed itself as the dominant power in the Mediterranean, though it would take another century to make that position effective. It could control all entry and exit from the doorway of Gibraltar, or prevent the French Toulon fleet from making contact with the Brest fleet. It could use its considerable sea power to transport troops from one part of southern Europe to another. Most importantly, it could monitor, influence or intervene in any development taking place on the Mediterranean shores. It could seek out and destroy Bonaparte's fleet in Egypt or defeat his continental system in Europe; influence the movement of independence in Greece and Italy so that they do not develop into surrogates of Russia or France, respectively; shore up the sick Ottoman empire to frustrate Russian hegemonistic designs and pursue a policy of containment against it while blocking its access to the Mediterranean; show the flag in Morocco or in Genoa, or wherever a warning needed to be served to the French; support the Triple Alliance by affording a degree of security to the two southern members, Italy and Austria-Hungary, by entering the Mediterranean Agreements in 1887; and generally watch out for the balance of power in Europe and guard its own more global interests. In the course of the nineteenth century, imperial Britain was less concerned with Mediterranean territory than with the sea. Itself an island whose security is guarded by a Channel, its concern in the Mediterranean was the possession or control of strategic islands and channels - Malta, the Ionian islands (temporarily), Cypus; the Straits of Gibraltar (through the possession of the Rock), the Straits of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus (through influence in Constantinople), the Suez Canal (through the occupation of Egypt).

The eastern counterpart and competitor of Britain is Russia, handicapped in the competition by a century's delay in registering its interest and by a century's interval between the definitive onset of decline in Spain and in Turkey. Where Britain's occasion for installing itself as the leading sea-power in the Mediterranean was the French subjugation of Spain and, in turn, the wars to contain France, Russia's penetration of the Mediterranean depended on the resilience of the Ottoman empire, despite its internal ailments still a formidable sea and land power by the early eighteenth century. A latecomer both in European and world affairs, Russia under Peter the Great sought to open a window on the West and break an entry into the South. In both the short and the long run, penetrating the West proved more practicable, in the Baltic Sea against Sweden, on the continent (under Catherine) into Poland. The journey to the Mediterranean was long and hazardous. All Peter managed was the Port of Azov on the Black Sea. But beyond Azov there were still the straits of the Crimea, and across the Black Sea the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Catherine made real headway when she conquered from Turkey the entire northern shore of the Black Sea and rights of interference in the Orthodox parts of the Ottoman empire in Europe, as well as a free passage for Russian merchant shipping through the Straits.The Christian-Muslim East-West contest long since having been abandoned, Catherine the Great picked it up again,

this time in a North-South direction, spicing it with the contemporary spirit of enlightement that Turkey in Europe seemed a negation of, and with the other ideological vehicle of panslavism. Her successors never let go the crusading banner in their relentless drive to liquidate the Ottoman empire. Making inroads into it on both the European and Asian fronts, they were protagonists in the most complex and long-lasting international issue of the nineteenth century, the Eastern Question. To Russia, the South, the Mediterranean, represented the dual function of expansion, free access to the open seas, political influence, on one hand; on the other, the security of the approaches, especially the Straits, to its own soft underbelly in the Black Sea.

In trying to achieve its objectives in the nineteenth century, Russia had to reckon mainly with the opposition of Britain, concerned about the Asian approaches to her position in India, the potential challenge to her own sea power and the European balance of power which the ever-expanding Russia appeared to threaten. The new East-West contest in the Mediterranean that developed during the nineteenth century therefore had as its protagonists non-Mediterranean world empires from the North. In pursuing, this contest - a *cold* war but for the Crimean War of 1854-56 - Britain adopted a policy of containment against Russia, in Europe by upholding the balance of power, in the Mediterranean and western Asia by patronizing regional states.

Having, by sinking Napoleon's fleet at Aboukir, warded off the French bid to capture the Middle East and thence improve France's chances in the competition for India, it was mainly with Russia in mind that Britain henceforth endeavoured to organize the "northern tier" territories into a buffer. Even as both powers reckoned with the common enemy, Napoleonic France, Britain in 1809 signed treaties with Persia, Afghanistan, the Sind and the Punjab, aiming thus to block the likely land approaches to India (Gillard 1977: 13-14). Patronage of the Ottoman empire followed logically. To the west, Britain had concurrently installed itself as a resident Mediterranean power through the acquisition of Malta and the Ionian Islands and shed its remaining doubts as to the value of maintaining a strong naval presence there after the war. British ambivalence in the war of Greek independence of the 1820s already revealed its concern that the Ottoman empire's breakdown was in the interst of Russia. Protection of the empire became the corner stone of containment from the Mediterranean, notably after the Russo-Turkish treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi (1833-1841) lapsed and Britain saw to it that it was replaced by the international Straits Convention. Tightened by means of war in the Treaty of Paris (1856), containment was preserved by a collective security arrangement in the Treaty of Berlin (1878). The short-lived Mediterranean Agreements (1887-1892) effectively linked Europe with Asia in the cordon of containment.

Containment was not remarkably successful. In the "Great Game" as the pursuit of Ango-Russian rivalry in Asia was referred to, Britain failed to arrest Russian encroachment into central Asia and lost the upper hand during the second half of the nineteenth century, although the feared Russian inroad into India did not materialize (Chamberlain 1974: 133-153). In the Mediterranean, the fragmentation of Bulgaria and its denial of a Mediterranean coast at the Congress of Berlin was regretted when Bulgaria threw over Russian protection. The Mediterranean Agreements, which Britain wanted to focus on the protection of Bulgaria in the East in preference to the protection of Italy in the West (Lowe 1965: 1-53), supported a Germanic alliance that soon emerged as the more serious threat to British interests. What had survived of the Ottoman empire fell under German influence. Both Bulgaria and the Ottoman empire fought against Britain and her allies in the First World War. In 1907, Britain and Russia resolved their differences in Asia by negotiation. During World War I, the wartime allies agreed on the partition of the remaining Ottoman empire, with Russia being promised Constantinople, no less.

Imperialism in the Era of European Nationalism

Especially before the discovery of oil in the Middle East early in the twentieth century, the Mediterranean theatre in this particular East-West contest featured primarily in the *political* objectives of the two main contestants, even if they possessed and expanded world empires for economic reasons. When colonial empire was held to be enhancing to a state's economic strength, neither Britain nor Russia can be said to have sought colonial territory in the Mediterranean for its own sake, although of course the Mediterranean itself was not shunned as an economic region. The same however could not be said of riparian states, namely France, Austria and unified Italy, to whom the territories of the region possessed intrinsic value, that is to say, worth appropriating. All three cast their eyes on the possessions of the Ottoman empire. After the unsuccessful bid by Napoleon for Egypt and Syria, France eventually conquered and colonised Algeria, Tunesia and, early in the twentieth century, hitherto independent Morocco. Austria, no newcomer in the Balkans, aimed at those portions of the Ottoman Balkans contiguous to it, especially after the resolution of the German question, and acquired Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1878 and 1908. Just before the First World War, Italy conquered and proceeded to colonise Libya, pointing the way to a future imperial claim on the Mediterranean. Even within the Mediterranean itself, the North had conquered the South by the early twentieth century.

A measure of how stark the North-South division in the Mediterranean continued to become, with a hierarchy of power - and equivalent levels of economic development - moving from North to South, is the experience of nationalism. Nationalism, the great political hallmark of nineteenth century Europe, though it manifested itself in the Mediterranean as it did elsewhere in Europe - more,

considering the sharper contradiction between state and nation - was invariably subjected to the directorate of the Big Powers. Of the two chief national unifications in Europe, where that of Germany was achieved entirely on its own steam, that of Italy had to rely on the military support of France and the benevolent aquiescence of Britain. Following unification, Germany became the ascendant power in Europe; Italy lived in fear of France and needed the support of Germany on the continent, of Britain in the Mediterranean. Other nationalisms were either thwarted or denied outright. Balkan nationalism in particular, where it had success, depended as much on the considerations of competing big powers as it did on the resilience of the communities concerned. The resulting Balkanization, with all its entailed limitations and rivalries, frustrated national aspirations as much as it realised them and sowed the seeds of future conflict and persisting underdevelopment. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, nationalist revival merely led to its transfer from one empire to another; something similar can be said of Albania. The non-European Mediterranean was altogether a different story. In North Africa, as noted, not only were national aspirations quashed, but formerly independent or semi-autonomous territories fell into European hands. Egypt, quasi-independent within the Ottoman empire and at one point even aspirant to its succession, first lost control over its own government to European creditors by going bankrupt and then fell under British occupation.

How colonial the non-European Mediterranean continued to be regarded becomes the more striking after the First World War. The new international order outlined to replace what now seemed to have been the treacherous balance of power, rested among other things on the principles of self-determination and collective security, with the League of Nations a central instrument of such an order. Out of the four vanquished empires, the liberated European territories were released and encouraged to form into sovereign national states. The liberated territories of the Ottoman empire in the Middle East, on the other hand, were shared out between the British and the French under League of Nations mandates. As for North Africa, it remained firmly in the hands of the victorious allied powers. Only Turkey secured sovereign national status, and that through military success.

The Cotemporary Mediterranean World: Old Wine in New Bottles

In the two world phenomena - the cold war and decolonisation - that followed the end of the Second World War, the Mediterranean was a proto-international system. The cold war being an East-West contest, and the struggle for independence and later against neo-colonialism a North-South contest, the Mediterranean contained ingrained experience and legacies of both. Once again, an East-West and a North-South tension intersected in the Mediterranean,[4] under some aspects intertwining and under others entangling with each other, but in any case fostering further fragmentation within the region, even as the protagonists of contemporary international relations ascribed to the Mediterranean a geostrategic unity.

As for the East-West contest, the Mediterranean featured in the very conception of the cold war long before the Second World War ended, when Britain and the reluctant United States pursued the war in the Mediterranean while starving the Soviet Union of a Second Front. In the later stages of the war, Churchill and Stalin were still discussing their future in the Mediterranean in the same terms as their British and Russian counterparts might have discussed them a century earlier. In October 1944, in a dress rehearsal of Yalta, the two statesmen clinched at Moscow the "percentages agreement" over the former site of the Eastern Question, with Britain (still guarantor of neutral Turkey) retaining Mediterranean Greece, and the Soviet Union most of the Balkan hinterland, as spheres of influence, while decision over Yugoslavia was procrastinated by the 50-50 per cent formula. At the close of the war, Stalin might well have been a Romanov, in demanding from Turkey the right to have Russian bases in the Straits and the return of Kars and Ardahan in Turkish Armenia, and Churchill a Palmerston in backing Turkey to say no (Carlton 1983; Rothwell 1982: 358-405).

The early twentieth century abandonment of Anglo-Russian differences had been rendered possible by Britain's realisation that, like Russia (and of course its ally, France) the real threat to its interests came from Germany. During the Second World War, circumstances once again had led Britain and Russia to shelve their differences and make common cause, if not common front, against the common enemy, Germany. The impending defeat of Germany eliminated the necessity of cohabitation and restored the conditions for the traditional Anglo-Russian adversity to reassert itself, at a point in time when the post-war role of the United States was still uncertain. This implied an urgent resumption of the nineteenth century cross-Mediterranean East-West confrontation, with the region and the sea itself a vital link between Europe and Asia. The patronage of Greece, the asserted British guarantee of Turkey, the upholding of the Montreaux Convention on the Straits, the row with the Russians over the latter's hesitation in withdrawing from northern Iran, the installation of Commonwealth troops in Venezia Giulia to check Tito's advance into Italy - these end-of-war stances follow the all too familiar pattern constructed by Britain in th nineteenth century against Imperial Russia. But for the time being, containment was pursued piecemeal and opportunistically, in the shape of putting stops wherever gaps appeared, rather than a co-ordinated strategy which Britain in any case was no longer capable of organizing. While Roosevelt might disapprove of the cynicism of the "percentages agreement", his successor Truman followed the same line of thinking when he led the United States into Britain's shoes in the Mediterranean, whence in Europe, Asia, and the world. He set off by

making Greece and Turkey the first test cases of his "Doctrine" in 1947, shrouded as it was in the ideological mantle of the cold war that the Doctrine institutionalised.

Parallel to its policy of containing Russia in southeastern Europe and Asia, nineteenth century Britain had used its paramount position in the Mediterranean to influence events in western Europe, the potential adversary here being usually France, since Russia had been kept bottled up in the Black Sea. This function of the Mediterranean as Europe's southern flank was after the Second World War recognised by the western allies within the new context of the East-West division of Europe, where this time, the adversary was the same Soviet Union. The defence of Western Europe was a distinct *regional* strategy before containment was formulated as a *global* strategy. The regional strategic function as Europe's southern flank was sealed by the decision to include non-Atlantic Italy in NATO when it was launched in 1949, although it had not been among the core group of the Brussels Treaty founded the previous year.

When Turkey, seeing that NATO was not being exclusive about its Atlantic personality, asked to be admitted as a member, it was still thought sufficient at first for the West to reassure Turkey that its *own* security was taken care of by the American guarantee that was built upon the Anglo-French guarantee of 1939. The picture changed when the start of the Korean War in 1950 inspired the notion of co-ordinated containment on a world scale. From that point onwards it was inevitable that the kernel of the former Ottoman empire should assume a key position in the scheme. Just as, in the nineteenth century, British concern for its position in distant India had influenced to a high degree the formulation of its eastern Mediterranean and western Asian policies, likewise the Korean War in the Far East was crucial in the role that the American-led West allocated to the same areas. Inasmuch as the Korean War signalled the world-wide spread of the cold war, the Mediterranean once more assumed a strategic importance in relation to the world, additional and complementary to its importance in relation to Europe. Straddling Europe and Asia, Turkey was placed to play a vital role forging contiguity between the existing NATO group and the projected organisation of the "northern tier" countries in western Asia. Once Greece and Turkey were clamped on to NATO (1952), Britain on behalf of the West put together the Baghdad Pact (1955). When Britain lost the Middle East at Suez, Eisenhower extended another "Doctrine" for the region in 1957, replicating Truman's committment to the Aegean neighbours a decade earlier. Meanwhile, the Balkan Pact (1954) attempted to supply the missing link in the contiguity of the containment chain by roping in Yugoslavia. The fierce independence of Tito could not allow the Balkan Pact to develop into an extension of NATO, even had the Greco-Turkish squabble over Cyprus not killed the Pact anyway. However, that same independence, sustained by American reassurance, meant that once again Russia fell short of reaching the shores of the Mediterranean, especially since Albania later on defected also.

In the later nineteenth century British statesmen had come to perceive an Anglo-Russian war to be "in the logic of history" (Chamberlain 1974: 134–149). Given all the precedents where the United States adopted as its own, despite original hesitation, hitherto British policies where Russia was concerned each time it stepped in to inherit hitherto British positions and commitments, the Atlantic "special relationship" that developed between Britain and the United States equally lay "in the logic of history". Just as, in the "Great Game", the assiduousness with which Britain sought to contain Russia was not matched by too remarkable a success, similarly containment within the context of the East-West Cold War did not deliver lasting results. Neither the Baghdad Pact and its successor CENTO nor SEATO further east acquired the cohesion necessary to make them effective as a barrier against the Soviet Union. Ultimately, the failure of containment was exposed for what it was when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, hot on the heels of American's loss of a major regional ally in Iran. Not surprisingly, that failure blew the whistle for the start of the second cold war. On the other hand, the poor cohesion of anti-Soviet alliances in the Middle East and Central Asia contrasts with that of NATO in Western Europe and the Mediterranean which, despite many shocks along the way, outlived the Cold War itself and is now lost for an enemy.

Imperialism in a Bipolar World

For when all is said and done the East-West contest belonged in Europe, not only because it was there that the iron curtain was most clearly drawn, but because it was in Europe that the essential ingredients – and values – of the East-West contest existed, namely, advanced capitalism cum liberal democracy and communism. Whereas in the generally-speaking developed countries the fear of communism was easy to sustain, many countries of the Third World had little in material terms that communism either threatened or could be grafted on. "From the point of view of the weaker governments", it has been suggested, "the Cold War has been conducted by methods similar to those employed in the Great Game, although the 'civilizing missions' to which they have been incidentally subjected have changed in character" (Gillard 1977: 181). As it turned out, the "civilizing missions" of both West and East remained as alien to countries on the periphery of the core bloc of Europe (with its Atlantic extension) as their nineteenth century equivalent had been. Indeed in many parts of the Mediterranean and Middle East, what the West stood for moved from being irrelevant to antagonistic. For what, in the prevalent post-war situation, acquired the appellation of "West" too clearly coincided, from this standpoint, with the traditional colonial powers and forces of the North. That Turkey, despite its underdevelopment, does not fall within this group is as much a result of its non-colonial past and its European calling as it is of the critical strategic importance attached to it by the West

and, conversely, its own real fear of the bodering Soviet Union.

Where French interest in the Arab Mediterranean had been mainly colonial, nineteenth century Britain had effected to be the dominant power in the region for essentially strategic reasons. After Fashoda (1898), Britain even traded recognition of French control over Saharan Africa for its own retention of the Sudan in virtue of Egypt. However, the discovery of oil in the Middle East early in the twentieth century combined important economic interests with the traditional British strategic interests in the region. Hence, after the Second World War Britain remained reluctant to give up its positions even after it gave independence to India and began handing over to the United States its traditional role in the Mediterranean. Though manifesting itself differently, the persistent imperialist mentality in the Mediterranean of both France and Britain meant that they had to be *forced* out of their colonial or para-colonial positions, leaving behind a resentment proportional to the difficulty of forcing them out. The results were particularly visible in Egypt and Algeria, and later on even more explicitely in Libya, the last to shake off Western control. The first anti-European backlash during the Arab struggle for independence was followed by the next wave of resistance to neo-colonialism, chiefly directed at the United States.

Since the personality of the former imperialists from the North now merged into that of the West, and since moreover the United States installed itself in the Mediterranean as both the leading western power and the leading economic power in the developed world - with Middle Eastern oil to feed the economies of the developed world as its primary economic interest - it followed almost naturally that the anti-imperialist radical states should lean, if anything, towards the eastern superpower. In this way, the North-South and the East-West divide converged. The same might be said for other regions in the world, but in the Mediterranean it is more visible because it borders directly the core of the one and same northern and western bloc. Furthermore, of course, the anti-western front of Arab radical politics was consolidated, and legitimized even in conservative Arab eyes, by the overt American support of Israel, easily perceived as the agent of continued western imperialism. The Arab-Israeli conflict towering so high in Middle Eastern politics, it is hardly surprising that Anglo-American efforts to persuade Arabs to make the East-West contest their own met with little success. On the other hand, despite the natural abhorrence of communism to Islam, the combination of anti-imperialist reaction and Israeli enmity opened doors for Soviet patronage in a region hitherto unpenetrated by the Russians.

Consideration of the gulf in levels of development between North and South within a world overshadowed by the contest between East and West eventually found expression in the nonaligned movement, made up as it was largely of ex-colonial countries trying to resist both the bipolar pull of international relations and neocolonialism. Given the intersection of the East-West and the North-South divides within the Mediterranean, it is significant that two of the founding fathers of nonalignment, Tito and Nasser, should have hailed from two countries here. Where Tito's nonalignment was conceived in the original heat of the Cold War and inspired by the condition of striding the political frontier between two blocs in Europe (East-West), Nasser's chief inspiration was the persisting foreign influence in the Middle East and expressed more the Afro-Asian resistance to neocolonialism (North-South). The meeting of the two schools gave the movement its formal character at the first summit of Belgrade in 1961 (Singham and Hume 1986: 13-27). If in the long run many nonaligned countries did not avoid being implicated in the East-West contest, bartering superpower influence for economic and political support in the form of patronage and aid, this was precisely because outside the formal power blocs the distinction between East-West and North-South was obscure from the start.

The EC in the Mediterranean North-South Configuration

On the other hand, and in direct contrast, within western Europe the East-West confrontation led to some erosion, such as was possible, of traditional North-South differences that traced their roots back to the sixteenth century. The programme of postwar European reconstruction, buttressed by Marshall Aid and other forms of American and western aid, reached out to include slow developers like Italy. Joining the Common Market as an original member, Italy's economic rescue further became the business of its partners to the North and it claimed the lion's share of EEC development funds, with a view notably to solving its own internal North-South problem. All long, the perception of the strong Italian Communist Party as a Troyan Horse accounted in no small way for the urgency of Italy's American and European partners to accelerate its economic development. Spain, whose political regime disqualified it from both Marshall Aid and the Common Market, became a direct beneficiary of American and American-inspired aid. Once democracy was restored, concurrently with Portugal, the way was open for joining the European Community, sensitive to the danger of a pendular swing to the Left. Further East, Greece's rapid accession to the EEC was similarly aided by the fear of a leftist reaction on account of American previous support to the Colonels' right wing regime (Pridham 1991). Thus, within the framework of the East-West contest, the European Mediterranean semi-periphery was *intentionally* attracted to the European core.

From the Mediterranean standpoint, however, the rounding up of southern Europe into the EC core only deepened further the marine frontier between the northern and the southern shores. Prior to the two Mediterranean enlargements (1981 and 1986), the division had been buffered by the formulation of an EC "global" Mediterranean policy, providing aid and preferential trading terms to the non-member countries. By the time

of the last enlargement, two factors in particular undermined the continuing promise of this policy. One was the effects of the enlargements themselves, since the heavily agricultural and semi-industrialized economies of the new members acquired first claim on the Euopean market at the expense of non-members with similar economies (Pomfret 1986: 98-100; 1989: 11-17). The other was the Single European Act of 1986 launching a new offensive in favour of deeper integration *within* the EC.

While these latter developments were independant of the East-West divide, the relations between western Europe and the non-European Mediterranean acquired a new twist with the termination of the East-West contest. Not only was removed the political reason for admitting new states from the South into the EC, but a new semi-periphery suddenly opened up to the East in direct competition with the Mediterranean, hitherto the Community's preferred region. The lifting of the Iron Curtain and the abrupt disintegration of a hitherto complete system in the eastern half of the continent resulted in a scramble for some form of association with the European Community just when the latter was embarking on a new phase of integration that implied deepening rather than widening. The centripetal force of Brussels contrasts sharply with the centrifugal force in the eastern half of Europe, as countries which have freshly recovered their sovereignty and nationhood dream of subsuming them again into that of "Europe". Faced with a stampede of applications and notices of applications for membership, the Community sorted them into three piles: the already developed EFTA countries; those of eastern Europe, and those from the Mediterranean. The fear of communism gone, and hence the days when Community membership might be a short cut for development being over, the EFTA group will get in first.

Crisis of Nationalism

The spectacle of nations at once fighting fiercely for their independence and longing to merge their identity into a Europe aiming, however piously, to transcend individual sovereignty, is tantamount to a reversal of history wherever national emancipation has not been matched by economic emancipation, as tough the substance of national fulfilment were reducable to success in capitalist terms. Gorbachev's warning to Honecker that those who are late will be punished by history (though ironically East Germany was the most rescuable), might easily be extented to all on Europe's periphery, with some benefit of the doubt to eastern Europe, including Croatia and Slovenia, who have the excuse of recent foreign control. The nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth had seen the completion of Europe's constitution into "bourgeois" nation states, the apparent maturing of a historical process begun four centuries ealier, within the framework of that same international political and economic order that both reflected and served the ascendancy of the North over the South. Apart from the post-World War I national reconstruction of Eastern Europe, the three main loci of national unification and consolidation had been the north-centre (Germany), the south-centre (Italy) and the south-east (Yugoslavia). In the long run, the resilience of the national state turned out to be in direct relation to the distance from North and West. Recent years have witnessed consolidation in Germany in the form of re-unification of East and West; strain in Italy in the form of the North's (Leagues') impatience with the South; outright decomposition in Yugoslavia in the form of the North's rebellion against the South.

The contrast between the nationalist experience is particularly stark in the cases of Germany and Yugoslavia. In both cases reconstitution and disintegration respectively are directly but in contrasting ways linked, on one hand, with the end of the Cold War and on the other, with the economic performance of the dominant partner within the union. Both countries lived on the frontier of West and East. Twice aligned by force of circumstances - half to the East and half to the West - Germany recovered national unity at the urgent behest of East Germany (which thus also became the only territory ever to join the EC without applying). Cornered between East and West by circumstances, and delicately balanced between them by choice, Yugoslavia began falling apart when the more developed North took flight from the hegemonising clutches of Serbia the moment that the East-West confrontation dissolved. Ironically, fear of the Soviet Union had abetted to no small degree the de-Balkanization of that same state which had pioneered the rebellion against the hegemony of superpowers. The rest was owed to Tito's statesmanship and his penchant for compromise and experimentation in federalism. Ironically too, the strategem of decentralisation, though perhaps unavoidable, helped to widen the development gap between the North and South. When first Tito and later the Russian scare disappeared, it was the prosperous former Austro-Hungarian North that was quickest to run away from the once Ottoman South.

The Ottoman Empire Revisited

With the synonymity of the North and West becoming ever so obvious, the synonymity of East and South has been exposed. In the Mediterranean, the reversal of historical trends is such that one might as well bring back the nineteenth century term "Near East" into the parlance of international relations, and the late mediaeval "Levant" to describe those portions of Europe and the Mediterranean South-Southeast of the new iron curtain that seems to be emerging. It cannot be accidental that the apparent schism runs along the same frontier where the dominions of the Ottoman empire once reached into Europe and that it cuts through war-torn Bosnia-Hercegovina, the part of ex- Yugoslavia which belonged respectively to both the Ottoman and the Austrian empires in the last decades of their existence.

Though qualitatively different and unrelated to the Soviet collapse, the crisis of nationalism - with all that entails to the crystallization of existing core-periphery relationships - is equally visible on the Afro-Asian precincts of the former Ottoman empire. The promise of Arab unity and renaissance, disappointed after the breakdown of the Ottoman empire and revived after independence from the European empires, has never been so distant. Even within the Arab world itself, hopes of integration of late have been scaled down to neighbourly constellations, and even so none too successful. In the West, the Arab Maghrebi Union, a sober alternative to the previous spate of abortive mergers, has not shown concrete signs of taking off. Despite the original objective of promoting economic integration, as much to meet the new challenges of dealing with an integrated Europe as to lay an economic base upon which to construct political integration, the countries concerned still contend with serious bilateral problems and trade more with Europe than with one another. They thus sustain a regional division of labour that has been more beneficial to Europe than to themselves. Across this side of the Mediterranean, two movements in particular, a physical and a cultural one, signal the widening gap between North and South: the wave of Europe-bound emigration and the upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism. The former a flight to richer pastures, the latter a disillusion with the imported, western, model of the national state and a recourse to Islam as the appropriate foundation of the *Arab* national state, both movements converge into one theme, namely, resignation to incompatibility. The hostility of Europe to immigrants and the Islamic revival being both grass-root trends, the gap is deepened even at the popular level on both sides, giving it a distinct flavour of a cultural Christian-Islamic cross-Mediterranean divide.

If the AMU appears to have stalled, its Mashreq counterpart the Arab Co-operation Council was practically stillborn. Foundering under the strain of the Gulf Crisis instead of helping to resolve it "within the family", one member, Egypt, fought against another, Iraq, in the ensuing Gulf War that the Arab League was impotent to prevent. Only the Gulf Co-operation Council has shown signs of staying power. But this is attributable more to the common self interest of protecting oil revenues than to the Arab nationalist ideal or to any vision of an integrated economic system in a region where the vast financial resources of its members could combine with the equally vast human (and military) resources of their Arab neighbours. The reshuffling of regional alignments during the Gulf crisis for a while after the war promised to forge complementariety between the military resources of Egypt and Syria and the financial power of the GCC. However, the Damascus six-plus-two initiative, a new base for Arab Co-operation and integration, quickly evaporated.

The end of the East-West confrontation, the collapse of the Eurasian Soviet empire, the chronic failure of the Arab world to achieve integration, the outbreak and effects of the Gulf War - all combine to expose a number of peripheries that seem to restore a core potential to the historic centre of the Ottoman empire, Turkey. In a sense, picking up the challenge would imply the return to a historic role long ago rejected by Turkey and resisted since. It has been proposed that the coming into being of the Eurocentric capitalist world-system in the sixteenth century was independent of and parallel to that of the Ottoman empire, a world-system of itself (Wallerstein 1987). That system in due course collapsed owing to the empire's internal contradictions, the external pressures from the North, and the long-term world ascendancy of the Euro-Atlantic economic system. The Kemalist Turkish nation reborn from the debris of the defeated Ottoman empire not only turned its back upon its imperial past but aimed to extricate itself from the Islamic Middle East by reaching out towards Europe. Seventy years of adaption in persuit of its European calling have not however brought it close enough to the core, either in terms of economic development or of the Europeans' own perception of Turkey, and its application to join the EC stands all but rejected. Almost half a century of East-West confrontation have seemed to favour Turkey's western, if not European, aspirations, with Turkey playing the West's man in the Middle East in return. No sooner did the end of the Cold War threaten to weaken Turkey's strategic utility to the West than the Gulf Crisis brought back into relief its vital position between Europe and the oil of the Middle East. Yet if Turkey's erstwhile role in the defence of Europe from Soviet Russia still did not qualify it for EC membership, much less does its revamped role as an essentially Middle Eastern power. Turkey has for years been developing economic and political relations with its regional neighbours. In particular its control over and development of their regions's major water resources, and the use of its territory to carry oil by pipeline to the Mediterranean combine with its relatively advanced economic setup to cast it in a leading role for the economic integration of the region (Robins 1992). So long, Turkey still entertains the hope that its European vocation can be sealed irreversably, by an economic and political *integration* in Europe. But by the same token, a definitive rejection should encourage it to revert to a historical role as a core Levantine state rallying around it the traditional peripheries. What remains to be seen is whether such a Levantine system, should it come about, would be complementary, subordinate to, or conflicting with the European.

A Monroe Doctrine in Reverse?

If the Mediterranean is all too clearly divided, the reverse side of that division is its interdependence, in economic as well as in political and security terms. As the division becomes more clear-cut, the decision whether to allow it to develop into confrontation or complementarity seems to rest, perhaps more than ever before in the last three centuries, on the *regional* actors themselves. Which renders increasingly ambiguous the role of the United

States in particular. Its utility to Europe is diminishing, as its superpower weight leans more and more on the South, from where it perceives that the threats to western (or northern, since the distinction does not seem to matter anymore) interests derive. There is of course nothing novel in this, except inasmuch as the ebb of the Soviet scare has highlighted and intensified it. It has indeed been suggested that the intensification of the Cold War from the late 1970s onwards was meant as a screen to cover the mounting offensive against the South, especially the Arab world, as evinced by the institution of the Rapid Deployment Force and the concentration of missiles in Sicily: "The Mediterranean is no longer NATO's southern flank against the Soviet Union, but NATO's central flank against the South' (Amin 1989: 15).

There never has been a clear distinction between the military, political and economic objectives of the United States since it became a Mediterranean power to support the defence of Europe and to assume the committments of the former European empires (Smolansky et al. 1983; Rosenthal 1982: 100–115). However, in the pursuit of its objectives, the overbearing force of the East-West contest in international relations often blurred further the distinction between the United States acting on behalf of the political interests of the "free world" and the United States acting on behalf of the economic iterests of the "first world". It also tended to blur the distinction between action on behalf of the western alliance and action on behalf of American national interest. American policy towards Iran, Egypt, Syria, Lybia and such states as at one time or other defied it, not as a Western, but as an "imperialist" power has often been explained in terms of such states' attachment to the Soviet Union. When not that, it has been explained in terms of such countries' implication in international lawlessness. The obvious example is Lybia, several times the object of punitive action during the 1980s, and more recently put under UN sanctions. The progression to proponent of a New World Order to replace the world balance of power points in the same southward direction, where the political and economic objectives meet, as the first NWO test case in the Gulf demonstrated.

New international orders however are not prescribed, but evolve in correspondence to real changes, and become meaningless propositions when, contrived in the euphoria of victory, aim to preserve the status quo against the pressures for change, as in the post-Napoleonic period, or lack the necessary objective conditions, as in the post World War I period. Besides, a contradiction between economic and military power has been exposed. After the sixteenth century, Euro-centricity was in harmony with an international order that provided the framework for political power to reflect economic strength. With the termination of the contemporary East-West contest, Europe again recovered centre-stage, in a condition of economic strength and despite its military weakness. Though on different scales, both Russia and the United States need Europe more than Europe needs them, and both are military stronger, even if a threat from either is not contemplated. The project of an independent European defence, if achieved, could rectify the contradiction. Of course, the definition of defense, and from what, if anything in particular, is what matters more.

Yet there are signs that Europe – geographically, historically, economically, politically and culturally part of the Mediterranean North-South configuration – is not insensitive to the security concerns of its neighbourhood. Thus, for example, during the detente and post-detente phases of the East-West division, convincing the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) to include the whole Mediterranean basin within its scope has been an uphill struggle, encountering opposition notably from the superpowers (Agnoletti 1986; Abbadi 1984).[5] On the other hand, the initiative for a Conference of Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) launched in 1990 points to a European appreciation of the principle, though progress in substance remains to be registered. The critical importance of Euro-American relations to the future security of the Mediterranean has been recognized even in the heat of the second Cold War (eg Zoppo 1984). There have been indeed within the Mediterranean many points of American-European discord, over such issues as relations with anti-democratic regimes in southern Europe, the Palestinian Question, Libya, and the use of NATO facilities for purposes other than defence from the Soviet Union, in addition of course to free trade rows over the EC's preferential trading with the Mediterranean countries. Within the cold war context, it has been suggested that the Mediterranean can only achieve autonomy as a region, and hence more security and a more equitable division of labour, if Europe weans itself from American dependence (Amin 1989: 17–22). That presumes a Europe – now liberated from the Soviet security threat and the corresponding dependence on American defence – that recognizes a community of interests with its peripheries and gives priority to them. Whether it would necessitate some European Monroe-Doctrine-in-reverse is something else.[6]

Conclusion: End of an Era?

The shift from Mediterranean-centricity to Euro-Atlantic centricity at the onset of modern history ushered a long era of neglect, foreign domination and fragmentation in the Mediterranean, the more so this century as the poles of international relations moved further out to the West and to the East. To date, it has been easier to talk of the Mediterranean *region* as a historical reality than as a contemporary one, given the potential for adversity – as opposed to diversity – that has existed and exists within and around it. Regionality has existed less in terms of the relationships between thedifferent parts of the Mediterranean or even in the subjective perception of most Mediterranean nations, than in the reckoning of such

external competing *world* powers different parts of the Mediterranean or even in the subjective perception of must Mediterranean nations, than in the reckoning of such external competing *world* powers as were capable of treating it as a single geostrategic entity (Fenech 1991). Consequently and ironically, what has best defined the Mediterranean region in terms of international relations is not the complementarity of its component parts but, on the contrary, its being the converging point of global conflicts, with all the regional divisiveness that entailed. With one such outstanding global conflict just terminated, it certainly does appear that disparity and adversity within the Mediterranean are as rife as ever. Appearances apart, the question is whether the end of the East-West confrontation is liable to erode or to deepen the North-South division. Given the cancellation of some of the most important historical experiments that have characterized the twentieth century, the question seems to come down to a simple one: do we *really* stand at the end of a historical era, or are we simply witnessing the vengeance of a very old one?

Footnotes

[1] On the swing of Spanish and Ottoman attention away from the Mediterranean, see Braudel (1972), vol. ii, 1143-85.

[2] Rapp contends that in the first instance the English and the Dutch owed their economic growth more to this penetration of the Mediterranean than to the exploitation of the new world.

[3] On this stage of decline of the Mediterranean, see Mathiex (1970).

[4] See the analysis by Luciani (1982).

[5] The protraction of the CSCE meeting in Madrid by several weeks in the summer of 1983 until a compromise was reached over a proposal by Malta is probably the best illustration of such resistance.

[6] Rosenthal (1982), 138-39, postulated that mounting superpower tension might have motivated Europe to re-explore the Gaullist "Third Force Europe" as a "semi-impartial" mediating force in Mediterranean conflicts.

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