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Crisis management and Order in International Relations The case of the Mediterranean

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Summary

No state or international system exists without order. Order may be just or unjust, democratic or imposed. Conflicts and wars come from lack of order, justice, democracy. The case study of the Mediterranean region analyses the internal and external reasons of its longstanding disorder. Open cooperative regionalism is the model to build a just order which may not necessarily be democratic.

Keywords: Autocracy, chaos, democracy, Mediterranean, order, states.

Résumé

Aucun État ni aucun système international n'existe sans ordre. L'ordre peut être juste ou injuste, démocratique ou imposé. Les conflits et les guerres naissent par manque d'ordre, de justice et de démocratie. L'étude du cas de la région méditerranéenne analyse les raisons internes et externes de son désordre de longue date. Le régionalisme coopératif ouvert est le modèle pour construire un ordre juste qui n'est pas nécessairement démocratique.

Mots-clés : Autocratie, chaos, démocratie, Méditerranée, ordre, États.

Introduction

Order is reputed as one of the constituent elements of nature and mankind¹. No society and especially no state, which we consider to be the supreme societal organization, can subsist in disorder. The legal recognition, which enables a community inhabiting a territory to function as a sovereign state, corresponds to declaring that this territory and its population are governed, controlled, and commanded by a specific authority that can ensure the monopoly of the internal legal violence, i.e.,

¹ This is a modified and updated version with the same title, in L. TROIANI, *La Diplomazia dell'Arroganza. Potenze e sistema internazionale nel XXI secolo*, Rome, L'Ornitorinco publish., 2023, p. 180-208.

order. The international legal recognition refers to a “national order on work”, certifying that a *de facto* sovereign entity is approved as an incoming legal member of the existing ordered community of states.

1. Order, Disorder, Chaos

Derived from the ancient Greek, the word “chaos” recalls the gaping void, the abyss. “Chàino” is a verb whose sense is “I split open”, or “I burst open”, whereas the verb “chao” means “I am empty”, and “cheià” signifies a pit, a den; “chaunos” stands for vain, and “chasma” for an opening. The roots “ka” and “gha” evoke a sense of being or having been left as empty and void, but, at the same time, open and incomplete. Any theory dealing with chaos feels the anguish of the emptiness, of the deep hole, of the abyss and vacuum left by the want of sense. This principle applies to individuals, to states, and to the international society. In ancient Greece Χάος was the personification of primordial Emptiness, preceding Creation and Time, before the imposition of Order on the elements of the world. Χάος begot Erebus and Night (Nyx), then the Day (Emera) and Aether (the Heavens). Sometimes Χάος is the son of Cronos (the Time), and the brother of Ether².

From the above, we can assume that chaos existed before creation, and continued after the establishment of time. The above lesson will help when we descend into the chaos of the Mediterranean: although we may suppose a certain order, disorder will endure all the same.

Genesis starts with the following³ : In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. ... Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Void, the absence of form, darkness, time, light. We can identify so many common elements in paganism and monotheism in relation to chaos and its overthrow! The Old Testament, with the phrase “Abyssus abyssum invocate”⁴, says a lot about the unsolvable enigma of the “chaotic” empty spaces, of holes⁵. In relation to this, hope arrives

2 The definitions come from P. GRIMAL, *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1988.

3 *Genesis* 1, 1-5, excerpts.

4 Deep calls into deep...”, *Psalms* 42, 7.

5 In the Bible’s text, the phrase refers to moral chaos.

with the New Testament's announcement that chaos has surrendered to "the Word". The Gospel of John starts with: In the beginnings was the Word... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness...⁶

When the *Word* appears, chaos retreats to the limits of the then "ordered" universe. We will see the usefulness of this consideration when applied in the secular framework of the "chaotic abyss" of Mediterranean international relations. Without the *Word*, i.e. the rationality of diplomacy as well as the contribution of culture science and knowledge, neither chaos nor the abyss can be avoided. It should be noted that the evangelist knows that chaos cannot be completely cancelled even with the *Word* in force. At the same time its presence is comforting, because it remains with us, sharing and blending with each person's individual and social life: our free will allows to choose between order and chaos. While nature is predetermined and governed by the principle of a final stable order, human beings must deal with chaos. If they are not capable of ruling it or winning over it, they will succumb to it.

The three embodiments of social groups and power-based organizations – family, religious community, and state – are based on the principle of order and simultaneous elimination of chaos. They have endowed the duty to respond to the different needs of their members, by raising effective barriers against risking chaos. The natural family trees guarantee the sharing of wealth, the rights of property, authority and dominance within a certain home or village. Religious hierarchies and canons, together with the obedience and discipline imposed by religion, avoid the insurgence of disorder and chaos within the temple. Exceptions may occur. There are religious wars, disputes, and family conflicts that violate temporarily natural and religious orders to be promptly restored, being the systems rooted in order and freedom from chaos.

6 *Holy Bible, John 1,1-5, excerpts.*

2. The states follow a different logic : Order, Disorder, Chaos, and states behaviour

A state begins as a principle, an abstraction or dream, that is transferred into form and reality through the willingness of a particular leader and a particular group of followers in a particular era and in a particular territory. The same elements play out when a state comes to an end. Perhaps decades, centuries, or millennia after its birth, others will destroy it, and, in so doing, realize opposite dreams that serve opposite interests and/or ideologies. If it wants to guarantee its existence, the state, from its very inception – *inter alia* – needs order. Romulus killed his brother Remus because he didn't accept the order Romulus was establishing in fixing "legal" limits on the land he had chosen for Rome's foundation.

Even though order appears as the primary and essential source of security and growth, different historical and cultural environments shape the above principle in accordance with cultures and times. In communities driven by nature (family, clan, small tribes) the process is organized and ruled by authority and consensus. In certain religious communities it is imposed through charisma and hierarchies, following the dictates of oral or written traditions or "books"⁷; in other religious communities by pure charisma and/or superstitious terror. Religious morality and taboos are part of the historical construction and durability of religious/moral order in the communities they influence.

Disorder – the zone between chaos and order – is the primordial soup where states are born and hope to survive despite their historical inability to trust one another and work together to build the international order. In political and artificial communities called "states", the imposition of order belongs to their architects and masters.

Their project will normally include the "separation" of their community from the rest of the human family, aiming at shaping a distinct identity. It is likely that forging an identity is the necessary step forward to future conflicts. Symbolically, endowing a population with its own flag and anthem, together with mythologies and folktales and shared interests, affirm both separation and opposition, generating the appropriate environment to set up conditions for conflict and war against an "enemy".

7 Reference to the Bible, Gospel, Koran.

Political regimes, in particular those we define as authoritarian or dictatorial, retain that, up to a certain extent, violence and aggressiveness keep the state strong and well equipped to survive and grow. It is not necessarily so. The nature of the state is two-faced: inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive in that it must be recognized and accepted by other states while also accepting and reciprocating the friendship of those states. Exclusive in that it must affirm its existence and individuality vis-à-vis its constituency/the citizens.

Internal control and consensus allow the state to earn respect from other states. Only with these conditions it may work as a discernibly partner, participating in the systemic order that an international community needs to survive. States are able to build order, disorder or chaos, internally or/and externally. In this respect, we may share the belief that chaos resides deep within the nature of the states, as an expression of chaos reigning in economic, social, cultural structures at its origin. From time to time every state may suffer from chaos and disorder. It happened in the United States during the Civil War, in Italy with the fall of Fascism, in a number of states members of Soviet Union after its implosion. At the same time, it may be affirmed that a basic aim of a state is to allow order to reign.

As far as the international system is concerned, chaos is an effect of the behaviour of the states, whose evidence is in the socioeconomic unbalances and military aggressions which characterize most part of the international system.

In this respect, a twofold consideration occurs:

a society ruled by a rotten state immediately searches for a new ruler to organize the set of institutions we call the state;

if and when the above doesn't take place, there is a "failed state" situation, where new forces try to build a new state where the previous one has failed.

When ample zones of chaos prevail in international system, we may deduct that a number of members of the constituency legitimizing the international system (states as well as other subjects⁸) demonstrate

⁸ Together with the states, big businesses and big technological innovators, international organizations, religious groupings, Ngos, groups of insurgents, terrorist groups, etc. are actors of the international relations.

contradictory behaviors and ideologies in suppressing chaos and establishing order.

Some even assert that the prevalence of chaos in international affairs is in their best interest. Having said this, chaos is not in line with the obligations of international law and cooperation requesting the states to keep order together with respect of ethical behavior. International law repudiates unjustified violence, and the discriminations based on prejudices, racism and gender; it also rejects aggressive foreign policy such as the race to arms and intimidation of other states and ethnic minorities. When states don't respect international law and human rights, they contribute to raising chaos in international relations. This happens because the ideologies and interests of the state and national interest prevail over the international order. Nationalism is the biggest enemy of international order. It fears that a truly "ordered" and "managed" international system will uphold the respect of

international law and therefore reduce the "hands-free" state ability to defend national interests⁹, even if that is achieved through the use of the violence. In international affairs, the endless fight for domination and security is both a source of chaos and a quest for order. Problematically, while chaos may be the result in such an environment, order appears to be nothing more than a meager aspiration. The quasi-anarchical international society, which we are accustomed to live with, results from the above assumption. Whereas the natural organizations are nurtured by their instinctive respect for natural order, and the artificial organization we call state is questing for order to survive, the international community is shaped in disorder, even though it is continuously to create the minimum of conditions to meet a universally agreed order.

We are in need of understanding how order can be established in international affairs, to set limits to the permanence of disorder, or chaos.

According to the liberal theory, to limit any state's claim to absolute power, some power of control must be assumed by an international organization¹⁰. In the case of the Mediterranean region, the theory applies

9 H. J. MORGENTHAU revised by K. W. THOMPSON, *Politics Among Nation – The Struggle for Power and Peace*, sixth edition, New York, Ed. Alfred Knopf, 1985, p. 5, says: "We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out."

10 K. N. WALTZ wrote in *Man the State and War, a Theoretical Analysis*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959, p. 96 : "In international matters, the absence of

to the inability of the Mediterranean states to bring order to the region. The situation requests that the UN and EU systems, in alliance with external powers active in the area, agree upon a new Mediterranean model of relationships that can settle lasting disputes and guarantee a long season of peace and growth. At a later stage, we will review the conditions that need to be fulfilled to make this process workable.

It is undeniable that the practice of realism in Mediterranean affairs did not bring stability and peaceful conditions to the region. Instead, the last decades, in terms of politics and security, have been characterized by chaos in certain situations, and disorder in others. At the same time, for a large part of the population, social and economic conditions worsened in such a way that discontent and imbalances have fed the so called Arab springs¹¹, and paved the way to Qaedism, Isis, Hamas, Hezbollah and other movements, reputed as terrorists by many international institutions and leaders. Lastly, realism inspired the Israeli action against Hamas and Hezbollah, carried on after the October, 2023 slaughter¹².

It can be said that, in the last four decades, Mediterranean suffered the absence of a serious International system contribution to its stabilization. Moreover, local and international non-state armed forces operating outside international law, actively contributed to make disorder to raise. As a result, in today's international affairs, the Mediterranean region looks like one of the most obstinate and supreme example of disorder, while chaos is the risk at the door.

3. Space and Geopolitics

Carl Schmitt writes: The appropriation of land appears to be the archetype of a constitutive legal process, externally (in relation to other populations) and internally (for the ordering of land and property

an ultimate political authority need pose only a minimum of problems. The problems posed are nevertheless important. Just as, with Hobbes, the liberals accept the state as performing necessary functions, so with Treitschke, they accept war as the ultimate means of settling disputes among states. War in international relations is the analogue of the state in domestic politics".

11 The first Arab Spring took place at the early 2010s. It began in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Bahrain. The second was a series of anti-government protests in several Arab countries from late 2018 onwards.

12 On October 7th, 2023, Hamas with other Palestinian groups had a coordinated armed incursions into the Gaza Envelope of southern Israel.

within a territory). It creates the most radical legal title, in the full and comprehensive meaning of the expression *radical title*¹³.

The transformation of chaos into order is a surgical operation: land and space are cut into different parts and each undergoes a process of sanitization. It is a traumatic and sorrowful process and, most of the time, it is imposed by the powerful. In the beginning, *nomos*, or the ordered measuring and division of pastureland, meant that any space without substance or principle could be freely assigned and ruled, that is assuming there was no resistance, and that expansion was infinite. Before becoming the “norm”, or the “law of the land”, *nomos*¹⁴, referred only to the partitioning of pastureland. Following the historical evolution of human affairs, people settled in a particular territory and survived on the material resources they found and produced, thereby becoming part of a new order that had once been real or imagined chaos in that particular space. Over the centuries, as tribes and clans evolved into states, *nomos* came to signify the possession of a piece of land; then the conquests came, the waving of a flag over terrestrial and maritime spaces, the exercise of full sovereignty over material wealth and human resources.

Within this context, we can assume that international relations are a work in progress striving for “the imposition of order”, with immediate and sometimes dire consequences on regional or world affairs. Karl Kraus would object: “Let chaos be, because order did not work”. We should instead continue the effort of establishing order over chaos. In fact, nature shows a permanent and insurmountable “horror vacui”¹⁵ or *kenophobia*. It both fears and rejects empty space. International system also rejects empty space: one of its fundamental rules is that an empty space is immediately filled by someone. Indeed, geopolitical teaching claims we can analyze international relations as the continuous unin-

13 C. SCHMITT, *Il nomos della terra*, Milan, Ed. Adelphi, 1991, p. 25-26.

14 This is not the only destiny the term *nomos* may assume. In ancient Greece the word identified the activity of measuring the land in order to organize it in that specific social context. In archaic times the activity dealt especially with the rights of common, what in English culture can be resumed as the *radical title*. As an effect it was later associated with making the norm, the law. The debate touching our argument arises on the different methods of “measuring” the land, on the differences historically experienced in acquiring lands.

15 The expression comes from the Aristotelian doctrine on the non existence of the gap, not necessarily confirmed by the Physics. In geopolitics, any space tends to be occupied. In accordance with Aristotle, we may affirm that “nature escapes the void”. In classical Latin texts: “*natura abhorret a vacuo*”.

interrupted filling of space. The process of “filling” is neither peaceful nor ethically nurtured. In most cases it appears generated and melted with aggressiveness. More often than not, it looks like the pure, hard expression of power politics, in terms of its supremacy, arrogance, and instinctive search of expansion.

According to Schmitt lesson, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the scientific revolution spread, politics shared and assumed the paradigm of the planet as “empty space”, i.e. what we referred to as “chaos”. Only with the Renaissance and Enlightenment, the concept of geopolitics, twinned with that of *limes*¹⁶, became universal. Given that “space” corresponded to what Renaissance physics and arts defined as something deprived of matter and substance – therefore likely to be subjugated and ordered – space had to be conquered and ordered.

It is a shared opinion that conquering and organizing space have been common practice of humankind and, consequently, of any organization in history. This is highly disputable. The excellent nomadic Mongol warriors moving from Central Asia to the plains of Europe, were not occupying a space; they were instead sacking and plundering a space, and then moving to another space. When the cherished Khan Ogoday died, on December 11, 1241, violent fights for succession erupted. In full respect for the Mongols’ laws and ethics, the great commander, Subotai the Valiant, withdrew to the Gobi region at the beginning of 1242 to mourn the dead king and take part in the elections of the new khan. The Mongols never returned to their previously conquered space where they had not organized any semblance of a state.

Of course, Romans had different targets and behaviour. The same can be said for their enemies in the Mediterranean, the Carthaginians. Coexistence in the Mediterranean area was unattainable, and only one of the two could dominate and persist in that region.

The domino effect shares a great deal with the above considerations. If the dominoes are to fall neatly in place, there must be no space between them; a missing domino is an opportunity for someone else’

16 It is an ancient Latin word, meaning “boundary”. *Limes* shares two qualities. It is the first defence against any invading army, and the point of departure for new conquests. Consequently *Limes* is at the same time mobile and a sacred symbol of stability and inviolability. Nomadic populations, based on tribal organization have a different notion and perception of *limes*. The example of Mongols showed how far that difference may go.

occupation and settlement. George Kennan's¹⁷ containment theory and the model of relations between East and West, supported the assumption that space and territories must be controlled and kept in order if they are to be removed from powers and groups of insurgents intending to expand. Indeed, his theory was built on his proposal to contain the Soviet Union during the long decades of the Cold war without attacking it, which would have resulted in a loss of dominoes¹⁸.

4. The case of the Mediterranean

With few exceptions, territories are shaped by the anthropogenic geography they experience. For millennia, the Mediterranean basin and its people have been subjected to the ambitions of external powers, becoming the focal point of numerous disputes and conflicts. Several factors contributed to this. The Mediterranean basin is the cradle of major monotheistic religions. Following the opening of the Suez Canal, it became the favoured maritime path from Asia and Africa to Europe's affluent markets. Additionally, it features extensive infrastructure for accessing the gas and oil fields of the Arab world, the Gulf, and Central Asia.

The traditional tribal organization, as well as familism and communalism, have not favoured the growth of robust and lasting nation states, recognized and supported by populations. The sole relevant exception of France is located in the northern shore and, up to a certain extent, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt in the southern shore. The weak "legitimacy" of the states contributed to the overwhelming influence and presence of foreign powers.

17 George Kennan was working at the State Department when, in 1947, in response to the aggressive policy of Soviet Union against Greece and Turkey, urged to contain Soviet power by counterforce.

18 The reference to Kennan gives opportunity to criticize American use of force to impose order on world affairs, during the recent decades. With very few exceptions, America has initiated wars to foster order and, instead of order, it has left disorder in the countries where it intervened. In this respect, the examples of Iraq and Afghanistan are eloquent enough. The roots of the two crises were different in nature, and different were the reasons for the American attack. In both cases America contributed to the disorder increase in terms of security, economic growth, social conditions, regional insecurity.

Despite the French historian Fernand Braudel's¹⁹ assertion that populations around the Mediterranean Sea share a common culture and destiny, significant divisions and contrasts persist among and within these states. In instances where colonial legacies are present, they have contributed societies characterized by backwardness, widespread social and economic injustices, a lack of democracy and fundamental freedoms, and regional disunity, all of which have further contributed to instability and crises.

Portugal, whose authoritarian regime ended in 1974, is still socially weak in most part of its territory.

Spain, which became a democracy only after Franco's death in 1975, suffers from structural unemployment, social and territorial imbalances, and separatism in Catalonia and in the Basque territories. It is also threatened by the disruption of the bipartisan regime which guaranteed democratic and economic growth for more than 40 years.

Greece, which returned to democracy in 1974, thanks to the failed invasion of Cyprus by the regime of the colonels, is surviving a long and painful financial crisis which disrupted many economic activities.

Cyprus is still a divided country, with the Turkish part under a strong influence of the Ankara government.

Turkey's limited democracy is under internal and external constraints, attacked by separatism, and pushed to a quasi-authoritarian regime by president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

On the southern shore, the situation remains disheartening. After the momentum of the Arab Spring waned, the Maghreb and Mashrek regions saw a resurgence of the previous ruling elites. In the Maghreb, Tunisia has reverted to authoritarian rule²⁰, while Morocco has opted to erect barriers against its Saharan citizens rather than seek a constitutional resolution to their grievances. For many years, Algeria has been grappling with the social and economic fallout from a fierce conflict with Islamic insurgents intent on overthrowing the regime established by the National Liberation Front movement.

19 F. BRAUDEL, *I legami permanenti della storia e dello spazio. Introduzione*, in *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, Turin, Ed. Einaudi, 1986, p. 2.

20 President Kais Saied regime is scarcely approved by Tunisian people. At Parliamentary election in 2022 the turnout was 11.2%. At October, 2024, Presidential election, 27.7%.

In the Mashrek, the Egyptian military regime, with its heavy grip over the population, looks determined against the Islamic Brotherhood and any social or political opposition which requests reform.

Israelis and Palestinians are far from resolving their perpetual conflict, continuously raising the number of the civilian victims and the level of destruction. At the same time, Iran became a fundamental regional actor, financing and militarily supporting proxies at the southern (Hamas) and northern (Hezbollah) borders of Israel.

Syria has been broken and fractured by a ferocious and bloody civilian war that was prolonged until December 2024 thanks to the Russian support to the ferocious and repressive regime of Bashir al-Assad. No serious forecast can be proposed on the nature of the political and religious regime the new government is going to impose. As for the Russian military presence in the country, a memo by Germany's Defense Ministry²¹ on the midst of December 2024, informed that Russia was preparing to completely withdraw its forces from military bases in Syria. As a matter of fact, at that date, Russia's Mediterranean Sea unit had already left its base at Tartus on the Syrian coast.

Libya remains on the brink of the partition and has to fight the presence of IS. The recent developments in Syria will affect the situation. Russia's military airbase at Hemeimeem, to the south of the city of Latakia, and the base at the port at Tartus have served as a logistics hub in Libya for Russian forces in Africa. It's easy to predict that the loss of Hemeimeem will hit Russian air transports to Libya, as the aircraft will transport less on a longer route. The active role of Turkey in the Syrian theater may result in future limits to the Russian overflight rights of heavy goods to Libya.

Following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Mediterranean Balkan countries experienced tensions and conflicts. Peace was eventually restored through external armed interventions and the efforts of the European Union. Slovenia and Croatia have since become members of the EU. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia are currently candidates for EU membership. Kosovo and Serbia are still dealing with relevant internal contradictions.

21 NURBANU TANRIKULU KIZIL, *Russia to completely leave bases in Syria after Assad's ouster*, Daily Sabbah, 13 December, 2024. Available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/syrian-crisis/russia-to-completely-leave-bas-in-syria-after-assads-ouster>.

Beside the social political and military unrest in the last thirty years, the outmost of the Mediterranean region suffered from ongoing mass migrations, ethnic and religious internal discrimination and strife, as well as economic and social malaise.

5. How to Establish the Mediterranean Order

More than one hundred fifty million people live permanently along the Mediterranean coast: a number that rises to 250 million during the summer tourist season²² (1/3 of world's tourism goes to the Mediterranean bordering countries, hosting more than 400 UNESCO world heritage site and about 250 maritime protected areas). As it was in ancient times, many still derive their incomes from fisheries: in the Mediterranean the annual average totals yield 1.5 to 1.7 million tons of fish. Strategically, it is even more significant that more than half of the global maritime traffic and 30 percent of global oil trade go through the Mediterranean, and that more than 20 percent of the world's merchandise traffic of goods is brought into Mediterranean ports. The Mediterranean region boasts over 450 ports and terminals. It is also significant as a market for 500 million local consumers.

If we share the realist theory that order must be established by an equilibrium of forces, we consequently accept that force should shape order in this strategic area, giving for granted that the practice of soft power²³ is not able to push Mediterranean nations to cooperate. Two or more powers (or systems of military alliance) should establish an equilibrium that would not be violated. As a matter of fact, realism has been unable to bring order to the Mediterranean Middle East, as

22 The total population of the countries bordering the Mediterranean is over 530 million: about 205 million on the northern shore and more than 325 on the southern and eastern shores. In 2050 it will reach 611 million: one third will live on the northern shore, and two thirds on the southern and eastern shores. Source: European Institute of the Mediterranean, IEMed, available at https://www.iemed.org/publication/demographic-challenges-in-the-mediterranean/#_ftn4.

23 Soft power is intended to be economic influence, democratic culture and values spreading political and humanitarian diplomacy. Often used in contrast with hard power, i.e. brutal force use of a state against another state. The origin of the expression can be found in a 1990 writing of Harvard' professor Joseph Nye. In 2004 appears Nye's book *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs. Soft power is the ability to get what we want by attracting others rather than by threatening or paying them. It is based on our culture, our political ideals and our policies. See J. S. NYE, *America must regain its soft power*, International Herald Tribune, 19 May, 2004.

confirmed by the heavy military operations conducted by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon from 2022 onwards. No imposition of order in the region seems likely in terms of realism, as there is no powerful force able to do it and a fragmented distribution of power among the fighting factions exists. Additionally, the involvement of external factors in the region tends to hinder rather than help establish order: their continuous supply of armaments to local allies perpetuates the arms race, thereby extending military build-ups and prolonging conflicts indefinitely²⁴.

In referring to realism i.e. the build-up of force, the use of war as an instrument to set-up order in international relations, we have to recall that, for the first time in human history, public opinions in America and Europe are oriented to refuse war as an instrument of international relations²⁵. It is no coincidence that for decades war planners have been inventing techniques of unmanned warfare, where the human presence on the ground is replaced by drones and other machines. We also recognize that traditional warfare is increasingly ineffective in resolving international crises²⁶. One reason is that, since the second Iraq war (the last "traditional" war in present times), wars no longer shape themselves as authentic international conflicts or as pitched battles. They, instead, have been transformed into internal civil, ethnic-religious conflicts; or asymmetric wars with high use of guerrilla tactics and psychological warfare; or conflicts with high presence of mercenaries and contractors.

24 In Middle East case, the reasoning may apply to the involvement of Iran, Russia, USA, UK. The recent activism of China in the Mediterranean may provoke an additional element of disorder.

25 See the difficulties in recruiting or drafting persons for war, that both Russia and Ukraine are experiencing. See also the answer given, in October 2024 by 45 countries, to Gallup global polls covering around half of the world population. One in two adults (52%) says that they would fight for their country if there was a war, a third would not, and 14% are not sure. In general, there are fewer people willing to fight for their country compared to ten years ago. It appears a split between South/East and North/West attitudes towards the readiness to fight for motherland. Willing to fight records 32% in EU, 41% in USA, 34% in Canada, while West Asia records 77%, the Middle East 73%, India 76%. To the question raised by Gallup «If there were a war that involved your country, would you be willing to fight for your country?», «No» is answered by 2% in Armenia and Saudi Arabia, 8% in Saudi Arabia, 20% in Russia, 34% in USA, 50% in UK, 53% in Spain, 57% in Germany, 62% in Austria, 78% in Italy. Available at <https://gallup.com.pk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GIA-PR-3-V2-1.pdf>.

26 In *La diplomazia dell'arroganza*, wars are provocatively analysed as an "obsolete" and useless tool of international relations. See L. TROIANI, *La diplomazia dell'arroganza, Potenze e sistema internazionale nel XXI secolo*, Rome, L'Ornitorinco edizioni, 2023, p. 465-475.

These are war methods which are impossible to manage and control with traditional war techniques and laws.

At the same time, idealism has never worked in the Mediterranean region. Every leader who has tried to inspire a union of states or the integration of economies, has failed. We may recall the efforts to establish the Arab-Maghreb Union between Morocco Algeria Tunisia Mauritania and Libya, the failed Union between Egypt and Libya, the disruption of the plan for a union between Egypt and Sudan, the difficulties of the Agadir 2004 treaty of free trade between Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, and those concerning the arrangements for a free trade between Turkey Morocco Tunisia and the Palestinian Authority, the limits of GAFTA, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area.

We may also recall the failures of the European Communities and the European Union' Mediterranean Dialogue, intended to build a shared area of cooperation and integration between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries. The last episode of the EU's efforts, defined as the Barcelona process 1995, resulted in the intergovernmental Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the organisation which aims to contribute to regional stability, human development and regional economic integration. Its record is not positive with a very poor attendance from the Southern governments.

While searching for a model able to provide solutions for the present situation in the Mediterranean, we must look at the factors that generated the present disorder.

Regarding the internal and domestic factors, the following should be noted:

- lack of political democracy in most of the southern countries, and consequently a lack of social control and political consensus among the population;
- vast social and economic inequalities, which have created discontent among populations and a strong ground for insurgency and unrest;
- demographic pressure, resulting in a significant number of young unemployed and illiterate people with consequent pressure on migration and marginal activities, a fertile greenhouse for recruiting Islamist terrorists;
- religious-political fanaticism in many southern countries.
- As for the external and international factors, the following should be

noted:

- the heavy religious confrontation between Shiites and Sunnis within Islam, becoming, in fact, a confrontation among states belonging to one of the two factions, resulting in additional instability and disorder (see how the fierce Iran Saudi Arabia fighting²⁷ for leadership in the Gulf was exported to the Arabic Mediterranean shores);
- the same applies to internal matters, through the evidence of foreign interference (the involvement of the Shiite Iran and Sunnite Turkey in Syria, respectively in favour and against Assad, provided a teaching example);
- the unresolved Palestinian question, with the scandal of a population deprived of his multimillennial hearth and forced to survive as refugees in their own land;
- the civil wars erupting in the region as an effect of the internal factors listed above, and resulting in horrible slaughters, like those recorded, in different times, in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Kurdish territories;
- the uncontrolled migrations underway because of wars and conflicts in neighbouring territories and countries, affecting Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Spain;
- uncoordinated and random military actions by external powers, creating additional disorder as its main effect, as seen in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Libya.

Both internal and external factors have created the Mediterranean disorder, resulting in phenomena such as:

- ✓ demographic southern pressure through uncontrolled and excessive numbers of emigrants and refugees trying to reach Europe;
- ✓ a bloodthirsty Islamist war to instal the Muslim Caliphate as wide as possible;
- ✓ Islamist terrorist actions and psychological threat on Israel and European Countries;
- ✓ foreign powers (namely Russia and China) new military presence, together with assertive actions from Turkey;
- ✓ fundamentalist attack against cultural and economic exchanges between South and North, challenging particularly the touristic

²⁷ Before the agreement reached thanks to the intermediation of China in 2023. On March 10, 2023 officials from Tehran and Riyadh met in Beijing to sign a deal restoring their diplomatic relations, reactivating the 2001 Security cooperation agreement. Iraq and Oman actively endorsed the Chinese diplomatic action.

sector, with substantial cultural and financial blows on the affected countries (Egypt and Tunisia above all);

- ✓ the downsizing of the North-South trade and investments in the region, hurting economic growth in southern European countries, whose economies are structurally open to relations with northern Africa. The EU contributes to about 80 percent of Morocco's and Tunisia's external trade, and more than 50 percent to Egypt's foreign trade.

6. EU and US: the past and the steps ahead

The US, after stopping the previous colonial European powers from influencing the Southern Mediterranean politics²⁸, and assuming the role of sole guarantor of security and political evolution, made fundamental mistakes in regional crisis management. It did not act as an honest broker in the controversy between Israel and the Palestinians, *de facto* tolerating Israel's risky strategies since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1995). There have been exceptions: the moderate position assumed by President Obama, who abstained from voting on the issue of Israeli settlers at the UN Security Council²⁹, and president Biden's pressure on Benjamin Netanyahu during the long lethal attacks by Israel against Gaza and Southern Lebanon, after October 7, 2023.

From the 1958 intervention in Lebanon to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US opened Pandora's box and failed to properly close it, leaving unresolved issues upon withdrawal. Consequently, the crises persisted and worsened, leading to further instability and renewed conflicts.

Europeans, particularly through their overarching institution, the EU, bear significant responsibility as well. The initial European Community of the Six, established by the Treaties of Rome in 1957, approached the Mediterranean from a perspective shaped by colonial experiences. However, the post-colonial era that emerged in the 1970s necessitated a reevaluation of this approach, leading to the initiation of the Euro-Mediterranean

28 It may be assumed that the matter is resolved, after the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, when US VI fleet is accepted as a substitute to UK marine traditional patrolling.

29 On December 23rd, 2016, less than one month before the expiration of his presidency, Obama culminated years of diplomatic harsh confrontation with Israel government of Benjamin Netanyahu, abstaining at the UN Security Council, on a vote demanding an end to Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory. Immediately after, Israel confirmed to be ready to build 618 houses in Eastern Jerusalem, the "Arab zone" of the town. The approach of Donald Trump to Israel and its Prime Minister will be totally different.

dialogue. This dialogue culminated in November 1995 with the signing of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Barcelona. It was the era of rich and multiform flourishing of dialogues and initiatives, all of them aiming at corroborating the peace process in Palestine and Middle East which seemed to have a chance for success³⁰. Following the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in Tel Aviv, the peace process disintegrated, and the subsequent developments in the situation escalated into terrorism and the horrors of war in the area starting from October 7, 2023.

Currently, the Mediterranean Countries are no more the target of a specific EU policy, being instead a part of the cauldron of the so called "Neighbourhood Policy". In that environment, single states retain the right to intervene, adding new elements of disorder to the troubled area and causing obstacles to the EU High Representative of Foreign Policy and to the Secretary general of the UN. It was the case of France with Libya, A similar scenario unfolded in the battle against the Islamic State, IS. Last but not least, as already noted, the lack of crisis management of the EU and US, has recently been partially filled by the presence of Russia³¹ and China.

This is neither in the interest of the European and American regional strategies, nor it is in the interest of the regional pacification. None of the above approaches are able to create conditions for order and security at the border of Europe, in an area at the centre of the world maritime and aerial traffics³², and the junction of gas and oil networks from the South to the industrialized markets.

30 Following the agreement reached in Oslo in August 1993 after seven months of secret negotiations, on September 13th, 1993, in Washington, D.C., Israel and PLO signed the common *Declaration of Principles*. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority aimed at settling the conditions for establishing, in a five year time, the definite solution of the Palestinian people situation. On the same year, started diplomatic relations between Israel and Holy See. Soon "Power Politics" destroyed the work done by the Social Democratic Scandinavian democracies to establish trust among the parties, letting them extend an olive branch across a half century of anger and hatred in the Middle East. "Business as usual" was promptly back in that region: stabbing Intifada erupted, walls were built to make secure Israel, and in both camps, political extremism and religious fanaticism enlarged consensus and support. Rational and lay forces were defeated.

31 From 2014 Crimea has been declared by Moscow as a territory of the Russian Federation. We have seen the recent developments in Syria. Russia keeps its presence in Cyrenaica, flirting with the local power not recognizing the UN backed government of Tripoli.

32 In 2015, the enlargement of Suez Canal confirmed the growing Mediterranean needs of the Asian big vessels on route to the North.

The model of order and stability we need, to respond the risks assessed, has to be based on four conditions:

- 1) it has to be inclusive (populations, legitimate governments and economic interests, foreign powers as elements of stabilization);
- 2) it must satisfy the legitimate interests of populations still questing for their own state (Palestinians, Kurds);
- 3) it must be guaranteed in economic and social terms by the agreement with EU for the full realization of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area, designed by the Barcelona Process;
- 4) it must be guaranteed, in political and security terms, by the powers and the UN.

It cannot be a matter of doubt that the EU is the most interested party in a Mediterranean order. At the same time, the EU looks unable to exercise the role it should, notwithstanding the fact that it is the most recognized international power using soft power as an instrument of international policy: it is not a chance that the EU is a Nobel Prize for Peace laureate (2012).

Economic, social and financial factors are relevant in requesting the EU role. More than half of the Southern Mediterranean trade happens with the EU members. More than 1/3 of the foreign direct investments in the area are also coming from EU countries. EU institutions donate and lend a yearly average over € Bn 3 to the Mediterranean southern countries³³. EU is the preferred landing place of the emigrants and refugees escaping from the south.

At the same time, the US is the champion of global hard power. The very nature of the Mediterranean crisis and the need to restore a lasting order in the region, require an appropriate harmonization between soft and hard powers to be spread through the region: it is up to Washington, Brussels, and the most influential capital (including Moscow and Beijing, and the Holy See in Rome), to research the conditions for achieving this.

33 On 12 February, 2024, almost € M 470 of EU humanitarian funding was allocated in the Middle East and North Africa to help satisfying the humanitarian needs in Gaza and the Palestinian civilian population, as well as the ongoing crisis in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and neighbouring countries. It was about ¼ of the total initial humanitarian aid of € Bn 1.8 for 2024. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_678.

7. The proposed Model

In accordance with the liberal theory, an international organisation should be set up for an effective and lasting crisis management in the Mediterranean. The theory does not imply that the frame for such crisis management has to be necessarily “democratic”, as confirmed by the failure of the “Arab Springs” backed by US democratic propaganda.

If the priority is order and security for everyone and all, immediate democracy cannot be the priority. During the Cold War, the containment policy against the Soviet Union was based on the same principle. Why should we not encourage the Arabs’ path to peace and development by bridging social and economic progress with cultural development and wait for the fruits of democracy to mature when the conditions are right?

President Roosevelt was an icon of the fighters for democracy and social justice, a sincere follower of idealism, helping to launch the Atlantic Chart and the United Nations, and appreciating the Beveridge Report³⁴, but he was realistic when needed. He was perfectly aware of how Woodrow Wilson’s extreme idealism had disrupted international politics, and he opted for a *realistic approach to idealism*.

Such realistic approach certainly implies a consideration of national interests. Each country sets its own national interests. They are economical (growing wealth), strategic (security and armaments), and political (a stable alliance and order). On a possible scale of priority, national interests will probably change depending on whether they are short term or long term.

As for the EU’s relationship with the Mediterranean, we probably concur that peace and cooperation are most vital to the national interest. However, the Mediterranean belongs to a larger space yet to be “ordered”, in the south from Libya to the Gulf, in the north-east from Turkish borders to the previous USSR central Asia republics.

34 On August 14th, 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill met on a ship, near the Canadian coast and signed the Atlantic Chart, defining the principles of International freedom, security and solidarity which had to inspire the post-war era. On behalf of British Government, William Beveridge (1879-1963) wrote, between 1941 and 1942, a report on welfare which circulated during the war among soldiers and governments of different countries, becoming the reference for many post-war welfare oriented social reforms in Western countries.

Before World War II, the colonial powers secured their national interest by creating dependent and colonial territories: France did this in Tunisia and Algeria, Italy in Libya, and, during certain periods, in Albania and part of Greece; the UK followed suit in Gibraltar and Malta in the West, and Cyprus and Palestine in the East, also exercising influence over Egypt as France did in Lebanon.

The system excluded native populations from participating in any political or economic model established by the colonizing country. After the independence, two fundamental groups of elites emerged in the former colonies: the traditional religious and tribe-like authorities, and the nationalist secular leaders of revolts against the colonizers. Both were, and still are, exemplification of vertical pyramids in which civilians have no say in political or civil affairs. We have to admit that interacting with citizens and a would-be electorate is more the domain of religious and traditional authorities than of secular or military elites, what explains the Islamists' successes at the election polls. In supporting the inclusive model, we are aware that a successful plan must include both leading pillars of the Arab-Islamic societies in the Mediterranean.

An anecdote derived from the Claire Denis' ten minute movie *Vers Nancy*³⁵, will help in understanding the cultural threat behind the above proposed scheme. The short film depicts an illegal immigrant girl initiating a conversation on a train, where she is travelling without a ticket, with a French university professor and sociologist. They discuss the word "intrusion" and agree that an intrusion is a menace to homogeneity and self-perceived identity. They move to the meaning the word assumes in psychoanalysis: an emersion from the unconsciousness, a "phantasmal menace", a pathology which may go to the limits of hallucination. The process described by psychoanalysis shows the intruder as having the power to allocate himself inside the other self and threatening the latter of modifications or cancellation. At the same time – Claire Denis says through the dialogue –the intrusion is part of the normality of life. Every human, each person is a result of thousands of intrusions. The dialogue concluded: "only a stone doesn't accept the intrusion, human beings are by definition intruded and intruders." We may add that life itself comes from a biological intrusion, that love

35 C. Denis, *Vers Nancy*, with Michel Subor, Grégoire Colin, Katia Golubeva, France, 2002, 10'. Information available at <https://harvardfilmarchive.org/calendar/intrus-vers-nancy-2008-11>.

is allowed to generate progeny only through physical and psychical intrusions, that societies must accept what appears to be the general tendency of nature and life.

In the colonial times Europeans intruded the Mediterranean Southerners and occupied their wealth and land. Nowadays, in a very different way and for different purposes, a reverse process is taking place: the militant Islam, the immigrants and the refugees intrude the European countries. The challenge may be either part of the inclusive approach here proposed, or it may constitute something to be fought, to be avoided. We already know what would happen if the EU did not accept the challenge. Security, the rule of law, lasting peace, economic balanced growth and justice make the basic conditions for an ordered society, where human rights are respected and development can take place: the Mediterranean Southern bordering countries have none of the above enlisted preconditions for developing an ordered and just society, and disorder, injustice and underdevelopment will continue to reign sovereign.

For the US, prioritizing the revitalization of the transatlantic alliance and adopting an inclusive approach to governance is essential. The US must recognize the critical need for international cooperation in managing global and regional challenges and propose a viable model for such governance. This is particularly pertinent in the Mediterranean region, where the military presence of Russia and China is an established fact that must be addressed, though it should not hinder the inclusive approach. Russia and China are members with veto rights in the UN Security Council. They have to be part of the “providing order” institutions, and their inclusion can generate the participation of subjects usually perceived as rivals, including Iran. The success of this strategy will only be assured if it is proposed from a position of strength, achievable through robust transatlantic solidarity in both intent and practice.

The aim is to establish an *inclusive security governance architecture* to give the region order, security and the conditions for living and growing. It will never work without partners like Iran and Sunni Arab states. A trade-off may be proposed to the participants of the inclusive platform, with concessions on trade and economic cooperation. The EU Neighbourhood policy may offer a paradigm to the above model: the liberties given to the signatories may be extended, with some specifications, to the nations engaging themselves in a scheme of pacification and growth. The trade-off will emerge within the framework of open

cooperative regionalism, an architectural approach that can stabilize the Mediterranean, much as it has in Western Europe for the past seventy years, where it helped to resolve longstanding disputes.

Conclusions

For Americans, the alternative to the inclusive open regionalism approach is seen in experiences such as the inconclusive military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. For Europeans, it lies in the failure of their soft power to effectively counter the risks emerging at their southern borders.

The soft power of EU could be part of the state building operations in inclusive open regionalism. Political fragmentation and rifts have to be reduced and state administration restored, if stabilization in the Mediterranean and the Gulf region is to be achieved. No political or ethnic group should be excluded, with the clear exception that Qaedist and IS factions will not be given a say in influencing the economic and social reconstruction of the countries they contributed to destroy. At this respect, Syria is waited for making clear what the nature of its new regime is going to be.

The system of regional inclusive governance should be supported by the external powers requested to share the architecture: the US, the EU, Russia and China. UN activism is also needed. Powers and local nations have to be aware that no global or local power is able to overcome the enemies of order, and manage alone the situation. It is a truth which is valid also for Israel, the state which, in one way or another has also to be included in this process.

History shows that in cases of pacification and confidence restoration, like the breakup of Yugoslavia and the subsequent state-building, challenges can be surmounted when there is strong political will. The proposed model of inclusive open regionalism aims to harness such will, addressing the needs of territories and populations that aspire to a peaceful future in both domestic and foreign policies. The path taken by France and Germany in 1951 towards European inclusive regionalism serves as a compelling precedent for any nation seeking to rejuvenate its growth and progress, without falling back into the pitfalls of traditional nationalist and ethnic power politics. While the challenges of implementing this model are acknowledged, no other comprehensive solution seems available to address the current disorder.