ПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ ЖИЗНЬ ПЛАНЕТЫ: ЛЮДИ, СТРАНЫ, МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ

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EUROPE, THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA AND THE INFLUENCE OF WORLD POLICIES

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Abstract: Since the European Union began to play a growing role in the relationships between the Member States and the Non-EU Mediterranean countries, the policymakers in Brussels have devoted a great deal of attention to devise and implement actions and programmes aimed at promoting *peace, stability and growth* to the area. The effects of such involvement have been not as significant as expected but not even insignificant. Tension has almost always floated over the Mediterranean waters because crises and violent conflicts have followed one another though never breaking all relations down. The present paper takes a cue from this feature of the Mediterranean area and proposes to watch the territory from a different angle of view. Contrary to the prevailing view of the Mediterranean as an area unaffected or scarcely affected by the dominant world policies, the paper analyses the impact of the world policy-making institutions and policies on the Mediterranean area. It also draws the readers' attention towards the participation and, in significant cases, the non-participation of the governments of the area in the world institutions and policies. Accordingly, the first section highlights the concepts useful to analyze the world as the political space in which policymaking institutions have been established for building policies that respond to world-scale problems. The second section outlines the significant security and economic world policies that have been established for responding to world problems and, consequently, for bringing

order to the world, the Mediterranean area included. In the third section, the focus is on forecasting the world and Mediterranean politics of the coming years by drawing the readers' attention to the confrontation of three big powers, the USA, China and Russia. The difficulty to keep unaltered the Western coalition could not impede the renewal of the US hegemony should disorder be unsustainable to loads of countries. The Chinese model of economic openness and the non-interference of the investing companies may not work in all the Mediterranean countries. By acting as a troublemaker and game-changer in security complex settings like the Mediterranean area by bolstering authoritarian regimes, Russia mostly wants to create a situation in which the United States and the European countries find it impossible to make any decisions without its participation. Accordingly, the paper's conclusions call for building knowledge about the reconfiguration of the world coalitions and the change of the existing order and institutions. Especially the revisionism of the three states competing for world leadership requires careful investigation. Research on the influence of such a global process on the wider Mediterranean area and the involvement of the Mediterranean countries in such a process is of paramount importance.

Keywords: Wider Mediterranean area, USA, China, Russia, World politics, Order transition, World policies.

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ЕВРОПА, СРЕДИЗЕМНОМОРЬЕ И ВЛИЯНИЕ МИРОВОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ

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Аннотация: С тех пор, как Европейский союз стал играть растущую роль в отношениях между государствами-членами и средиземноморскими странами, не входящими в ЕС, политики в Брюсселе стали уделять большое внимание разработке и реализации действий и программ, направленных на поощрение мира, стабильности и развития в регионе. Эффект от такого участия оказался не столь значительным, как ожидалось, но, тем не менее, ощутимым. Напряжение почти всегда витало над водами Средиземного моря, потому что кризисы и жестокие конфликты следовали один за другим, но никогда не разрушали все отношения. Настоящая статья основана на этой особенности Средиземноморья и предлагает взглянуть на этот регион под другим углом зрения. Вопреки преобладающему мнению о Средиземноморье как о зоне, не затронутой или почти не затронутой основными мировыми событиями,

в работе анализируется влияние международных институтов и действий, влияющих на Средиземноморский регион. Автор также привлекает внимание читателей к активной, а в некоторых случаях — к пассивной позиции правительств региона в мировых институтах и международной политике. Соответственно, первый раздел предлагает вниманию читателей концепции, пригодные для анализа мира как политического пространства, в котором были созданы институты для проведения политики, реагирующей на проблемы мирового масштаба. Во втором разделе излагаются основные международные подходы к безопасности и экономической политике, которые были разработаны для реагирования на мировые проблемы и, следовательно, для наведения порядка в мире, включая Средиземноморский регион. В третьем разделе основное внимание уделяется прогнозированию мировой и средиземноморской политики ближайших лет с учетом противостояния трех великих держав — США, Китая и России. Препятствия для сохранения в неизменном виде западной коалиции не могут помешать возобновлению гегемонии США, если беспорядок окажется неприемлемым для большого числа стран. Китайская модель экономической открытости и нейтральности компаний-инвесторов может работать не во всех странах Средиземноморья. Нарушая спокойствие и изменяя правила игры в сложных условиях безопасности, таких как Средиземноморье, поддерживая авторитарные режимы, Россия стремится создать ситуацию, в которой Соединенные Штаты Америки и европейские страны не могли бы принимать никаких решений без ее участия. Соответственно, выводы статьи призывают к накоплению знаний о реконфигурации мировых коалиций и изменении международного положения. Особенно тщательно следует исследовать политику ревизионизма трех государств, соревнующихся за мировое лидерство. Первостепенное значение имеют исследования влияния такого глобального процесса на более обширный район Средиземноморья и на участие средиземноморских стран в этом процессе.

Ключевые слова: Большое Средиземноморье, США, Китай, Россия, мировая политика, преобразование правопорядка, мировые стратегии.

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The policymakers of the European Union and of the Member States share the opinion of the Mediterranean area as the geopolitical area that is the less subordinated to the world political order and, therefore, the less affected by the policies of the world institutions. The present paper disputes such view and frames the analysis of Mediterranean politics within the political science knowledge about the world institutions and public policies that bind all the countries of the world. Second, the present paper deals with the greater Mediterranean area which encompasses all the countries from the Sahara Desert to the Persian Gulf and up north to Scandinavia and Russia. Since the end of World War II, the European

approach towards the Mediterranean area has been changing in line with the changing of the world order. Europe recognizes that the area is embedded in the world political system which has a structure of institutions designated to make policies applying to all the states irrespective of the area the states are located in. This does not mean that compliance with the world public policies, which regularize the interaction of the states and bring order to the world, does not vary across space, i.e. from region to region, and over time, i.e. over the life cycle of the world order.

It is likely that the number of collective problems that are efficacious solved at the world political level will grow in the next future as the environmental and cyber security problems, not to say the health and great diseases problems, today are demonstrating. The states recognize to few world policy-making institutions the authority to issue policies towards a limited number of collective problems concerning security, sovereignty, finance, trade, and the free circulation of the seas, oceans, and air. Although political order is visibly lower in today's world than it was about forty or thirty years ago, one should not disclaim that also at times of decreasing order and growing defiance to world policies and rules, like the present one, most governments abide to the policies that have been issued by the world policy-making institutions. Accordingly, the present paper draws the readers' attention towards the impact of the world policy-making institutions and policies on the Mediterranean area and as well towards the participation of the governments of the area in the world institutions and policies. The first section outlines the concept scheme for the analysis of world politics and the current phase of order transition. The second section profiles the security and economic world policies of the contemporary world politics. In the three subsections, the impact of these policies on the wider Mediterranean area is emphasized. In the concluding section, focus is on forecasting world politics in the next years.

Concepts for the analysis of world policies

In any society of equal and autonomous units, each unit copes with problems on its own. When a collective problem comes to the surface, i.e. a problem that affects all the units and is optimally got under control by binding all the units to the same response, a political space comes into existence because all the units share the interest to act and as well share the interest to act as the members of a political system generating the appropriate response to the collective problem. Should each unit respond to the collective problem on its own, disorder will spread out in the society. Should each unit respond to collective problems by the policy response produced by the common political system, order will spread around because the reaction of every unit to the collective problems is 'regular', i.e. conformed to only one of all possible responses. In other terms, sharing the policy response to the collective problem brings into existence political order, i.e. the 'generalized' convergence of all

the members of the society on the decisions and policies that have been agreed within the institutions of the shared political system.

As it comes to the contemporary world political space, the present argument is that the states consent to respond to few collective problems by complying with world 'public' policies. In the post-world-war-two world, the problems of the finance and trade area and the area of the problems of state security from aggression are the first set of collective problems the states decided to rule by means of public policies made by world policy-making institutions, namely the IMF, WB, GATT/WTO, and the UN. In the following decades, collective problems such as climate change, transnational crime, mass migration, and the control of major diseases have been put on the policy agenda of the world political system. Agreement to respond to such problems by approving international law treaties has been reached, but true public policies have not been made.

The world public policies are optionally abided by the states, in other terms abidance is a matter of choice of the individual state. In the present discourse, abidance by the sovereign states means that each state will make the national policy and legislation consistent with the world policy. Serious violation, i.e. missing convergence on the world policy, is sanctioned by the states that support the policy and by the international institutions that have been empowered to sanction the violation of the policy. Sanctions consist in economic and diplomatic actions. Coercive sanctions, i.e. the use of force and military intervention, are adopted only to respond to the violent aggression to the territorial sovereignty of a state when the UN Security Council decided so. Despite the weak sanctioning mechanisms, in normal situations the majority of the states comply with the world policies. Breaking the world policies is politically significant, instead, when it is made for de-legitimising political order and propping up order transition [Attinà 2021].

The institutions that have been mandated to make the world policies towards, finance, trade, and security have been created on the initiative of a coalition of countries and are defended especially by the countries that profit the most from the action of the institutions. Such institutions are taken in due account because order is preferable to dis-order since it makes possible living in predictable conditions. On the other hand, these institutions are the object of the de-legitimising opposition of the countries that profit from lessening the strength of the existing order. Such revisionist countries promote dis-order and could come to the decision to form a coalition against the status quo coalition and to struggle for establishing the new world order (See Fig.1).

Any political order changes through a life cycle, that is, it develops through a process that goes from the onset to the end phase. A good way of representing the life cycle is one that distinguishes four phases [Modelski 1999]. In the onset phase, the coalition of the countries that have prevailed in the confrontation of the last phase of the previous cycle generate the new world order. They select the main collective

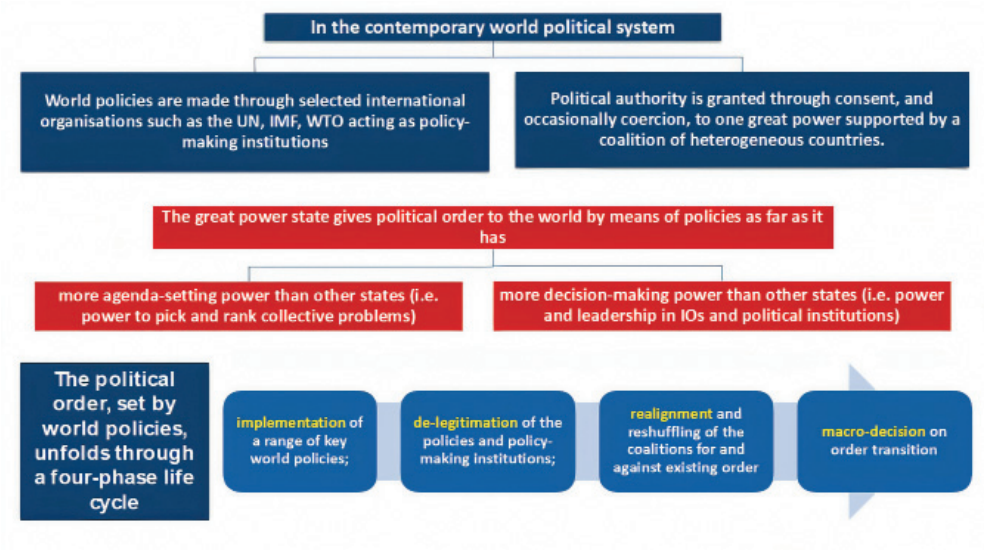

Fig. 1

problems and create the institutions that make and implement the new public policies. The lead of the process creating the institutions and designing the policies is taken by the coalition of the countries that has won the confrontation with the status quo coalition that defended the previous world order. The onset phase is followed by the de-legitimation phase, a period of decreasing effectiveness of the world institutions, lessening impact of the public policies, and increasing opposition by antagonistic countries. In the third phase, the revisionist countries agree on the design of the next word order and form the coalition that want to knock down the existing order. The two coalitions confront each other in the fourth macro-decision phase. The historians and political scientists of the international hegemony school have demonstrated that the conflict between the revisionist and status quo coalition of the past centuries was always a world war, and that the victorious coalition was led by the most powerful country that was able to determine the political institutions and the fundamental policies of the new order.

The countries of the Mediterranean area and the main world policies

The West European countries have been involved in the making of the main world policies and have supported such policies more than other countries. The countries on the Southern side of the Mediterranean area, instead, did not participate in the making of those policies. Some of them have participated instead in the de-legitimisation of the policies. In the past thirty years, the de-legitimation of the world policies and of the politicymaking institutions has been increasing.

Consequently, the United States ability and power to continue leading the world order has been questioned. Political scientists have discordant views about whether the American decline is absolute or relative, irreversible or contingent [Cronin 2001; Datta 2009; Ikenberry 2001; Nau 1990; Norrlof 2018; Nye 1990; Puchala 2005; Russett 1985; Skidmore 2005; Thompson 1990; Thompson 2006]. But they agree on downgrading the performance of the American hegemony since the late 1960s. In present times, a heated debate is open about the impact of the confrontation between USA and China on the future world order and the inclusion of Russia in such confrontation.

The impact of the world policies of the American world order on the Mediterranean area and the involvement of the Mediterranean countries in the world order life cycle (which are summarized in Fig. 2) are examined in the present section.

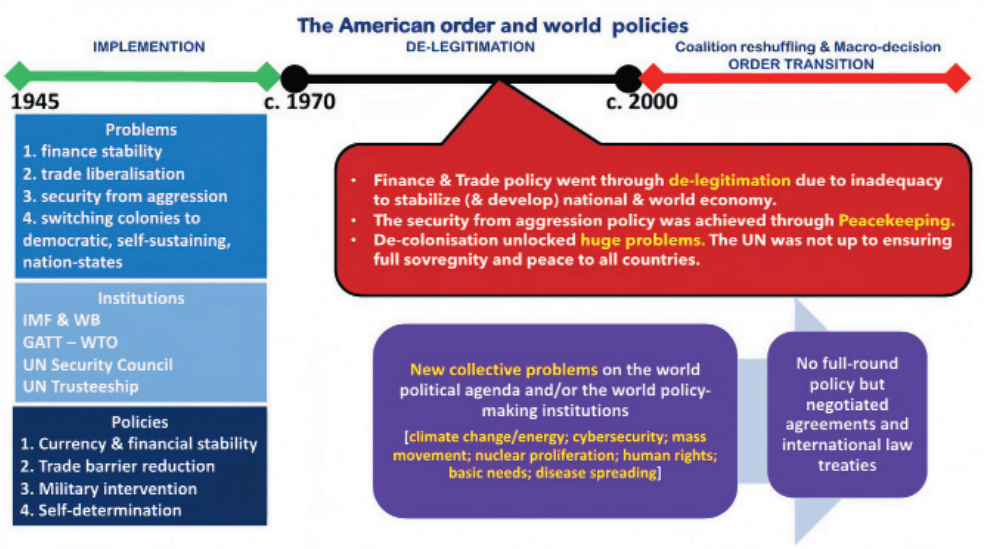

Fig. 2

In the early years after World War II, the world policymaking institutions undertook the task of making policies towards two problems that the Western policymakers considered as the most important source of instability and conflict in the world. The institutions were mandated by the leading countries of the world to (a) build sovereign and democratic nation-states in all the areas of the world and (b) create the conditions for growth of all national markets within the world liberal capitalist economy. Such objectives were consistent with the values and principles the world war winning coalition governments had agreed on during the war negotiation. The world order had to be based on the values of the equal sovereignty of the nation-states, the primacy of law and diplomacy, and the human

rights. The corresponding principles were constitutionalism, democracy, national self-determination, and international cooperation.

Building sovereign, national, and democratic states in the vast area of the colonized world required to put in place two policies, the policy towards ending the colonial rule, and the policy towards inhibiting aggression and strengthening the security of the single state and the whole world. Implementing both policies was the remit of the United Nations. The former policy was accomplished in quite a short time by enforcing the self-determination principle. In many instances such policy had disappointing results. Especially in Africa and also in Asia and the Middle East, the new states had to cope with conditions generating political disorder and economic inefficiency. The task to address the latter policy and ensure the security of the states, instead, achieved better results. The UN Secretary General and the Security Council overcame obstacles to the full enforcement of Chapter VII of the Charter and put multilateral security into practice by creating the peacekeeping operation mechanism. Such operations, either organised or endorsed by the United Nations, changed the security of the states into a public good that was provided by the UN and UN-endorsed organisations as the actors of last resort of the security good [Attinà 2011; Attinà 2014].

During this phase, the colonies existing in the Mediterranean area turned into independent states. In March 1945, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria created the Arab League. Yemen joined the League in May. The League was unable to play as the venue of negotiation and mediation in the interstate violence that erupted from the Jewish decision to form the state of Israel. The League was as well scarcely productive in preventing the violent turn of domestic political and economic conflict. Domestic conflict between political factions sometimes enlaced with confrontation between the country political leaders and the foreign-owned companies that controlled important economic resources. This was the case of Iran for the oil industry, and Egypt for the Suez Canal. Briefly, the fragile state building action of the United Nations in all the colonial areas of the world turned up also in the South-Mediterranean area (Fig. 3). The United States played the leading role in the complex situation by involving the world security organisation, the United Nations, and various political allies in and out of the area. The United Nations acted as the security provider of last resort by sending peacekeeping missions to contain violence in the area. The political allies of the United States joined in to prevent the feared connection between the local anti-Western political forces and the Soviet Union. This was the case of the Baghdad Pact, signed in 1955 by Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The United Nations involvement was decisive for the security of the South-Mediterranean states, Israel included. The region was indeed the place where peacekeeping firstly entered into use as the instrument providing security to states at risk of fatal collapse because of external aggression and civil war. The UN

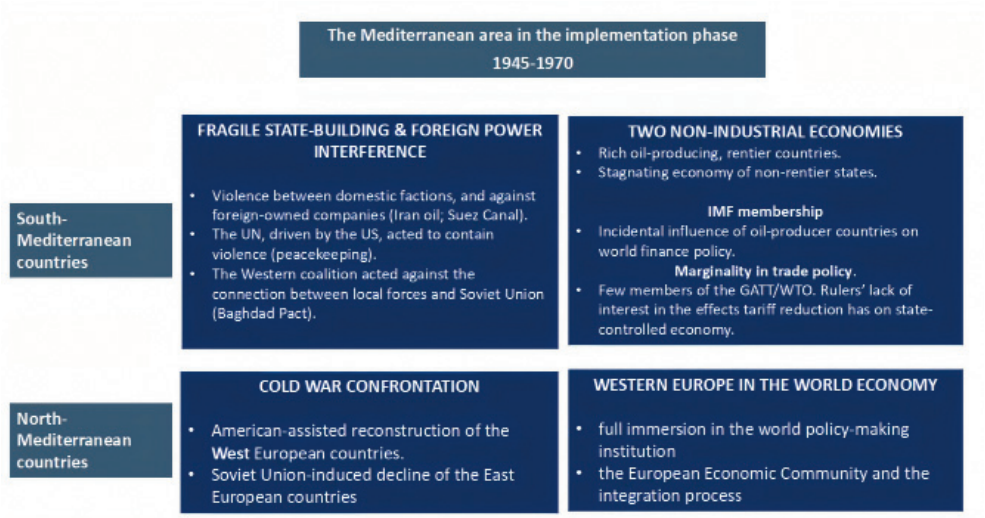

Fig. 3

Truce Supervision Organisation, UNTSO, was the true first UN peacekeeping mission. It was dispatched to monitor the end of the fighting of the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948. In this phase, the UN sent to the area four missions, the UNEF 1, UNOGIL, UNYOM, and UNFICYP mission, to monitor respectively the post-Suez crisis situation, the Lebanese Israeli border, the Yemen and the Cyprus domestic situation. From 1945 to 1970, the world security organisation, the UN, created five peacekeeping missions (the four just mentioned and UNTSO), on the total of 14 missions, to oversee the security of Mediterranean countries. The decision to organise peacekeeping missions is the power of the UN Security Council. But the UN General Assembly made the decision of sending UNEF 1, as it had six years before with respect to Korea [Diehl 1988]. Two peacekeeping missions, UNTSO and UNFICYP, are active in 2020.

Briefly, in all the phases of the contemporary world politics, everywhere and the in Mediterranean area, the UN acted as the institution of last resort to protect the life of the states. The UN do not prevent territorial wars but any state death as the outcome of an armed aggression (see more in: [Attinà 2011, p. 115–119]).

The second set of goals of the new world order, building economic stability and sustaining growth, was the remit of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). The IMF had to monitor and drive the fixed exchange rate of the national currencies to the dollar, which was claimed to be convertible to gold. The WB had to provide investment capital to sustain national economies in need of financial resources. In 1945, Iran and Iraq were of the group of the thirty IMF original members. Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey joined two years later. All the remaining countries

of the Mediterranean area joined IMF in the following years. Consequently, in 1971, the year of the end of the fixed exchange rate and the flag date of the demise of the first phase of the American world order, all the Mediterranean governments were forced to adjust their currency to the flexible exchange rates.

By contrast, the states of the wider Mediterranean area did not share the same approach toward the world trade policy. The European communist states and few of South Mediterranean countries joined the GATT, the acting world trade organisation that in 1995 turned into the World Trade Organisation, WTO. Turkey became a member of the GATT in 1951, Israel in 1962, Kuwait in 1963, Egypt in 1970. Morocco and Tunisia became members in 1987 and 1990. All of these countries joined the WTO at the time of the establishment of this organisation, 1995. As of today, Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria are in the process of accession to WTO. The East European states entered the GATT after the end of communism with the exception of Yugoslavia, Poland and Romania. They acceded to the GATT, respectively, in 1966, 1967, and 1971.

The governments of South Mediterranean states poor in hydrocarbon resources and those of states rich in oil and gas had little interest in the effects of free trade on the state-controlled economy. Oil revenues in the major producer states like Algeria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, permitted economic growth and investment in infrastructure, education, health, welfare, and state-owned business. But the upheaval of the world financial policy that epitomised the end of the first phase of the American world order put an end also to the attitude of the governments towards the world economic institutions. In the following world order phase, the effects of the end of the Bretton Woods policy on the currency reserves of the oil-producing, rentier countries and as well on the poor economy of the non-rentier states changed the economic policies of all the South Mediterranean countries.

In the late 1960s, the growth of the richest economies reached its highest. Afterward, turbulence hit the financial markets with consequences on the developed economies and as well on the developing and stagnant ones. Economic problems had negative impacts on politics. France accused the United States of destabilizing the world currency market because of their monetary policy, damaging the European industries with the unbalanced flows of trade between the two sides of the Atlantic, and as well binding the European states' foreign policy to the American policy which was unable to respond to the end of the military pacts that in the 1950s the United States had built in the Middle East and in South-Asia. The Non-Aligned Countries Movement was joined by the Group of the Seventy-Seven, established in 1964 within the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, in formal recognition of the need for reforming the world economy and boosting the growth of the backward economies against the world policies that advantaged the Western economies.

At the very beginning of the 1970s, all these events and process brought into existence the second phase of the contemporary world politics, the phase

of de-legitimation of the American world order (Fig. 4). In general, the flaws of the post-World War policies towards building sovereign, national, democratic, and self-sustaining states in all the areas of the world delegitimated the world order and affected its stability. In many countries of Africa, Asia, and in Central and Southern America, external interference in the national politics and markets turned the sovereignty of the states into a mere artefact. The local rulers were deprived of the power to build the post-colonial state. In general, the political class of the new independent states was unable to face the tremendous problems of ruling the multi-national, multi-ethnic society inherited from the colonial powers. In almost all the Third World countries, economic problems, external interference, and the inability of the policymakers to run the political and institutional regime, which was modelled like the European state, caused the fall of the new-born democratic regime and the rise of autocrats and dictators. Failure to respond to such problems gave rise to the de-legitimation process of the American world order.

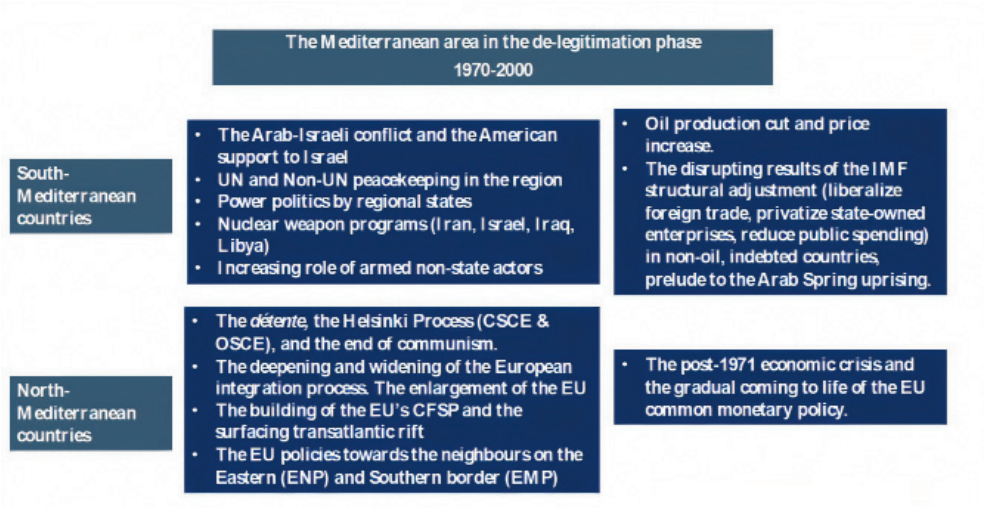

Fig. 4

The step change of the world order from the implementation to the de-legitimation phase impacted heavily on the Mediterranean area. The decision of the American president to end the convertibility of the dollar into gold and to let the dollar value fluctuate in the currency market caused the financial crisis of the countries with large dollar currency reserve. Saudi Arabia and other oil-producers decided to cut oil production and to enact embargo on oil export against the United States and other European countries, thereby driving up the oil price. They claimed that the decision was their political response to the American support to Israel in the 1973 October War where the Israeli military defeated the Egyptian army that had launched a surprise attack in order to get again in control of the Sinai Peninsula.

Since the Seventies, the United States and the Western allies intervened in South Mediterranean countries directly and through the UN peacekeeping mechanism to control international and internal conflicts. On the whole, the UN peacekeeping missions achieved the objective of limiting violence and keeping stability. At the same time, peace-keeping minilateralism has been pushed up by regional organisations and groups of *willing* states that launched Non-UN-organised peace operations [Attinà, 2014]. Generally, the countries participating in minilateral peace-keeping missions add the individual goal of interfering in local conflicts to the general interest of containing violence. The most advanced democracies like the European Union states turned towards minilateralism by organising CSDP operations, i.e. operations of the EU's Common security and defence policy, and diminishing their contribution to the UN-organised peace operations [Bellamy, Williams 2009].

Minilateral security was applied to intervention in the Middle East but the United Nations continued to be the major security provider institution. This time, the UN acted in two war theatres, the Israeli-Arab and the Gulf theatre because of two aggression wars launched by Iraq against Iran in 1980, till 1988, and against Kuwait in 1990. After the 1973 Yom Kippur war, UN sent the UNEF II mission to monitor the cease-fire, and the UNDOF mission to do the same at the Israeli Syrian border. UNEF II ended after the signature of the Camp David peace agreement. UNDOF is still active like it is UNIFIL, the mission sent in 1978 to assist the Lebanese government in re-establishing sovereignty after the penetration of the Israel Defence Forces in Southern Lebanon. Furthermore, from 1982 to 1983, USA, France, Italy and the United Kingdom organised the Multinational Force in Lebanon, MNF, to divide the Palestinian and Syrian armed groups from the Israeli army. Such Non-UN force failed to accomplish its mission, which was transferred to UNIFIL.

The control of nuclear energy for military purpose was also a source of de-legitimation of the American hegemonic government. In addition to Pakistan, North Korea and South Africa, two countries of the wider Mediterranean area, Iraq and Iran, advanced their nuclear weapons efforts in relative secrecy. The Iraqi nuclear weapons program, despite the IAEA inspections, was revealed after the Iraqi defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. In 2003, the IAEA reported about the Iranian clandestine nuclear activities in violation of its safeguard's agreement. In 2003, also Libya closed the WMD programs, including a secret nuclear weapons program, and accepted the IAEA inspections. The Arab states stood up against the Israel's non-NPT status and assumed possession of nuclear weapons. In this time, also the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free of weapons of mass destruction was discussed at the level of the NPT review conference for several years but ever achieved to an agreement.

In the de-legitimation phase, minilateralism overcame multilateralism also in the economic sector. With the end of the Bretton-Woods monetary regime, the world economic institutions were no longer able to fix the financial regime

and revert to fixed exchange rates. Private investors overpowered the IMF efforts to stabilize financial markets. The Group of the Seventy-Seven raised the demand to replace the capitalist market policies and institutions with the project of a New International Economic Order. But things turned out differently. The governments of the leading Western economies opted for structural adjustment policies, a set of measures including the liberalization of foreign trade, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the reduction of public spending that the Bretton Woods institutions imposed on the countries in debt as condition to aid them to exit from budget deficit. Morocco was the first Mediterranean state to sign a lending program with the IMF in 1984, followed by Tunisia in 1986, Jordan in 1989, and Egypt in 1991. But the improvement of the macroeconomic indicators these programs brought to these countries did not match the negative effects on the society. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality grew all along with the people resentment that ended with the 2011 uprising known as the Arab Spring [Mossallam 2015].

The de-legitimation of the world American order was also the effect of the foreign policy decisions of the US Presidents of that time. Policies such as the anti-communist and anti-Chinese policy in Asia and the anti-Palestinian policy in the Middle East caused trouble also to the countries of the core of the American coalition. The first move of the European states to distance their foreign policy from the progressively de-legitimized American foreign policy was the "Declaration on European Identity" that was released in Copenhagen, on 14 December 1973. The Community members claimed that the European identity, not the Atlantic identity, was the guiding principle of the common foreign relations. Briefly, since the early Seventies, de-legitimation of the American order has been the joint effect of the institution failure to respond to the problems on agenda and of the antagonistic opposition of governments that wanted to destabilize the world leading state. The inadequacy of the world institutions to accomplish the founding goals of the world order, namely protecting the sovereignty and developing the economy of all the states and not only those of the dominant coalition, generated the problems that stirred up the de-legitimating disappointment of governments within and outside the American coalition. In the economic sector, the rise of the oil price changed the energy market and affected the trade relations and economic plans of the developed and developing countries. In the technological sector, industrial production generated environment pollution. Overpopulation, migration, inter-cultural strife, and growing transnational crime impacted on the society of many states. The policy response by the world institutions was not always up to the problems on agenda. Mostly, governments looked for short-range solutions. Some states negotiated common policies at the region level and with likeminded countries. This pushed up minilateral networks and further shook the existing coalitions.

Transition from the phase of de-legitimation of the American order to the coalition-reconfiguration phase began as early as some established alliances and

alignments such as the Soviet bloc and the Non-Alignment Movement started to slack down, and the foreign policy elasticity and volatility of important countries produced critical diplomatic change such as the institution of the G20 meetings, the China's membership of the UN and IMF, and the China and Russia accession to the WTO. For sure, the increasing number of loose alliances and trans-regional alignments, and the elasticity and volatility of the foreign policy of many states are symptoms of coalition reconfiguration but such process is still slow and unclear today (Fig. 5). The ball is definitely in the great powers' court. Gap between the United States and European allies is widening but the American leaders are not able to build up vital coalition ties with new partners. Russia strives to build a front of friend countries but is unable to turn it into a solid coalition. The Russia close friends are mainly countries placed on the Russia's near abroad while the Moscow leaders strive for building special relations with African and Mediterranean countries as they have done with the Syrian regime. The response of an increasing number of governments, especially of Africa and Central and Southeast Asia, to the Chinese offer of investment capital at no political conditions demonstrates the China's intention to de-legitimize the American hegemony but this is not enough to demonstrate that China leaders have decided to form the coalition of the countries ready to remove the existing order.

Fig. 5

It is widely believed that disorder will last for long, and that coalition reconfiguration is not even on sight. The sources of the long-run disorder are nationalism, populism and the political leaders' discourse on *my country-first*. They cause trade conflict and the fading of multilateralism as option of policymaking for

responding to security problems and re-launching economic growth in the world. I argue, instead, that statesmen prefer order to disorder because world functioning policies generate the predictable environment that makes easier to achieve economic growth and political stability. The problem they have is with whom to build the coalition of culture and interest that will forward the political order and public policies they prefer.

Knowing that also in the past centuries, countries formed coalitions of interest and culture under the leadership of major powers to promote political order and make the world a predictable world, the key question now is whether or not coalitions are in the making under the leadership of which country or countries in order to address the revision or overturning of the de-legitimized world order. The present section proposes to increase knowledge about which countries are inclined to revisionism in today's world politics, what coalition potential they have, and how this affect security and politics in the wider Mediterranean area.

Do the biggest countries of today, the United States, China, and Russia, have the ambition, resources and qualities to close the present order cycle and become the leader of the next one? Which country is the resolute revisionist that is fitted with the coalition power that is necessary to win out the confrontation over the leadership of the next world order? Revisionist states want to change the principles, rules and institutions of the existing order in view of enhancing their own values and interests in the policy making. To achieve such goal, the revisionist state develops its economy and financial power, engages itself in armament buildups, and strives to enlarge the circle of the friend states, especially those discontented with the existing order and policies. Therefore, the revisionist state has to equip itself with the ideational, entrepreneurial and leadership qualities that are valuable to integrate the values and ideologies of the coalition members and as well to shape the institutions and policies fitting the interests of the largest possible number of countries.

Since the World War Two gave to the **United States** the opportunity for building a tremendous culture and interest coalition of states, they have been able to gather around themselves numerous and varied countries from all the areas of the world. They created military alliances, bilateral and trilateral diplomatic pacts, and special relationships. The cohesion of the different groups and networks of countries of the American coalition has not been homogeneous. The cohesion of the group of the European states was very strong in the first phase of the order cycle. In the successive phases, cohesion decreased but the inter-member strains did not impair the solidity of the Euro-Atlantic coalition. The cohesion of the Latin American group also has been generally high. The remaining groups of allied countries, instead, have been little cohesive and mostly volatile.

Generally speaking, the cohesion of the American coalition is lower today than it has been in the past. The commonality of culture of the United States and the core members — i.e. the European countries, Canada, Japan, Australia, and

New Zealand — is remarkably high. But this inner circle is shaken by economic and political problems. Some leaders tend to stress their distance from the other coalition members and to underrate shared interest in the economy, trade, and security sectors. The countries of the outer circle of the American coalition, instead, share interest rather than culture with the United States. Generally speaking, partnership has been volatile except that of many Latin America countries, a few countries of the Asia-Pacific such as South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and countries like Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Morocco in the Mediterranean area. Relations with Saudi Arabia have been always important to the United States due to shared interest in the oil and security sectors. The American administrations took Saudi Arabia as a strategic partner, but bilateral relations faced crises and were never in complete harmony. In spite of the common objective of regional stability and of containing Iran, they differ on core issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, intervention in Yemen, and the fight against terrorism.

The difficulty to keep unaltered the coalition role in the world policy-making institutions would not impede the renewal of the US hegemony if disorder is considered unsustainable by a large number of countries, and if China and Russia temper their own revisionism and withdraw from building the antagonist coalition. Indeed, for the time being, the American army is much ahead of the China's and Russia's army in terms of lethality, technology, and force projection. This asset is very much taken into consideration by the coalition members, the ones of the Mediterranean area included, which are worried for the security threats originated by hostile neighbours. It is taken into consideration also by the non-coalition countries that are menaced by American foes and may choose either to join the American coalition for interest or give their *external* adhesion to it as free riders. Furthermore, the US economy has many pluses compared to the economy of China and of Russia. The American dollar continues to be the world strongest reserve currency. The American companies continue to be dominant in foreign direct investment. In 2019, the US economy is high growing, and it is the leading economy in key sectors like biotechnology and nanotechnology. It is also on the front line of higher education and research.

China shared with the non-aligned and developing countries the goal of restructuring the world government to give to all the nation-states equal voice in the world policy-making institutions. But, in the late 1980s, after Mao's death, China's foreign policy changed enormously. The new Chinese leaders turned to adapting the country's foreign relations to the rules of the US-dominated world institutions in the belief that China gains the most from acting peacefully within the structural constraints of the existing order. China's compliance with the UN rules and policies is demonstration of the China's willingness for playing inside the existing order and avoiding significant disruptions in the world political system. This does not mean that China rules revisionism out. China wants to exercise world policy-making leadership at coequal status to the United States. Concurrently, China's

diplomacy tends to create close relations with states that could become the members of a coalition that could reshape the existing world order. Additionally, it is in China's interest to turn its own economic power into political power.

China's coalition power is expected to grow after the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is aimed at promoting trade, economic development, and transport links and consequently to fertilize political relations between China and countries in Eurasia and Africa. Yet, the China's search for status on the forefront of the world order begins in Asia. The growing Chinese economy and finance power could draw many Asian countries into the Beijing's future world coalition. The second reservoir of the China's coalition power is Africa. The African rulers appreciate the China's policy of respecting African autonomy and ownership in conflict resolution operations.

The Belt and Road investment opportunities and the need of energy for China's growing consumption and industrial production are crucial to the relations between China and the Middle East countries. The region's economic importance to China lies in the fact that almost half of China's oil imports and 20 per cent of Chinese exports to the Middle East, North Africa and Europe travel through either the Strait of Hormuz or Babel-Mandeb at the entrance to the Red Sea [Dorsey 2018]. These relations demand that the whole Mediterranean area is safe. Hence the decision to create the military base in Djibouti, effective in 2017, and to run a dynamic military activity in the region after the abstention from the UN Security Council Resolution 1973, in 2011, which enabled the toppling of Mohammad Gadhafi and entailed a loss of billions of Chinese investments and geopolitical assets.

Dorsey maintains that China shares with the United States the policy approach towards the Mediterranean area consisting in keeping stability rather than promoting equitable political reform [Dorsey 2018, p. 3–4]. But, supporting stability by backing autocratic regimes brings the population resentment against China, same as against the Western countries. In various Middle Eastern countries such resentment taps into the perception of threats involved by the Belt and Road investment. In other terms, the Chinese model of economic openness and non-interference of the investing companies, may not work in all the Mediterranean countries.

Russia's leader Vladimir Putin, a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, succeeded in raising the national economy, stabilizing the domestic politics, and restoring the international status of the country. Since the early 2000s, Putin aims to make Russia on the lead of the group of the states comprising India, China, and Iran that claim to make the world a multipolar system, and oppose the United States and the Western coalition. The challenge to Western dominance was apparent in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and, later, the invasion of Ukraine's eastern provinces.

Intervention in Syria is exemplary of Putin's assertive foreign policy. The control of the Middle Eastern country by giving military and economic support to the anti-Western leader of Syria gives to Russia influence in the region and, thereby, a role

in world politics. Furthermore, in the wider Mediterranean area, cooperation with the governments of the oil producing countries is vital to Russian economic power since such cooperation provides control on the world energy prices.

By acting as a troublemaker and game-changer in security complex settings like the Mediterranean area and by bolstering authoritarian regimes, Russia mostly wants to create a situation in which the United States and the European countries find impossible to make any decisions without its participation.

Conclusions

The analysis of the Mediterranean countries' strategy towards the world political order and policies reveals three remarkable aspects. First, only the West European countries had an important role in the establishment of the world policy-making institutions. The East European and South Mediterranean countries were not members of the war-winning coalition and, even though some of the latter like Iran were soon co-opted, they were not of the core-member group of the American coalition. Some of them did not become members of the world economic institutions for a long time. Some are still in the WTO accession process. The Mediterranean security politics, instead, has been heavily conditioned by the United Nations. The UN multilateral security mechanism was, indeed, experimented firstly in the region in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, the UN prevented that the aggressor country achieves the goal of the aggression. Furthermore, there are no signs that the UN multilateral security mechanism will be removed from the Mediterranean area. Even though, the UN intervention will be influenced by the current confrontation between the three major powers on the future of the world order, none of them is biased against the UN role in the area. Second, the oil-economy countries have been capable of defending their wealth when financial crises repeatedly hit the world economy, but the non-rentier, non-oil-economy countries of the region have been disadvantaged by the policies of the world financial institutions. Furthermore, the world trade liberalisation policy does not give to the South Mediterranean countries chance of defending their non-industrial economy. Third, on the whole, the South Mediterranean countries are neither primary actors of the world policy-making process nor politically active members of the leading coalition. Indeed, they are not involved in the emerging coalition reconfiguration process. On the whole, the level of compliance with the rules and policies of the existing world order is low in the region while some countries side by the group of the countries that de-legitimise the current order.

Researchers should pay attention to the causes and consequences of such patterns of relations between the South Mediterranean countries and the world political institutions and policies because the world is moving towards the re-construction of the world order and policy-making institutions. The present paper has drawn attention towards the emergence of confrontation between three big powers (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6

It is important to develop knowledge about the reconfiguration of the worldwide coalitions that could change the existing world order and policymaking institutions. The revisionism of the states competing for world leadership must be carefully investigated. Research on the influence of such global process on the wider Mediterranean area and on the involvement of the Mediterranean countries in such process is of paramount importance. The political and economic strategies of the governments of this area are crucial to the coalition reconfiguration and the world economy reconversion after the increasing use of renewable energy resources. Mediterranean experts, instead, tend to develop knowledge on the discontinuity of the politics of the area from the politics of the world order. World order is sought by the big states and is preferred to disorder by most countries. Therefore, the present politics and future development of the Mediterranean area must be studied within the framework of the world order politics.

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