

# AFRICA AND THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER OF EUROPE

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## INTRODUCTION

Geopolitical factors have had a marked, albeit historically variable, importance in Spanish-African relations. Elements which have defined the geopolitical framework of these relations include the geographical proximity of the regions, the distribution of the Spanish territories (peninsula, archipelagos, and African enclaves) and their coastal Atlantic-Mediterranean position. This context has thus lent a marine dimension to the phenomena of traffic and contact between the two continents.

During the second half of this century the geopolitical space which has seen the development of Spanish-North African relations has been the scene of the crossroads of developed and developing countries and in particular of the east-west blocs. The new century opens with the conclusion of the bipolar model and with the deepening of the differences between north and south. From a geographical perspective the last stage of European construction amounts to the reinforcement of the border formed by the Atlantic/Mediterranean arc (Balearics-Straits-Canaries). In other words the arc will act as a political frontier (displacing the Pyrenees barrier) restraining migration flows and form, definitively, Europe's economic, social and cultural frontier.

This paper will examine these elements characterised by their spacial dimension which defines and forms the regional geopolitical structure (frontiers, resources, means of cooperation). In addition it also examines the territorial dynamism of the region characterised by its traffic space and manifest in its transport network and flows of immigration and commercial traffic.

## 1. THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN FRONTIER

The African and European continents converge in a marine basin, the Mediterranean.

The geological characteristics of this basin have formed a model used to define all relatively small and deep seas which are surrounded by continents or land masses<sup>1</sup>. The convergence of both continents via a geological process has today become the scene of a political, economic and social phenomenon.

In its broadest sense the marine frontier is both boundary, dividing line and at the same time a place for integration. Consequently this location has led to the creation of a scene not without certain special features; the emergence of new frontiers; the relocation of primary industrial activity; and an environment so closely shared that an international programme has been instigated pioneering the organisation of the marine space. This first section analyses, in synthesis, three significant points illustrating this perspective; the strategic space; the natural resource sphere; and the areas of cooperation.

### 1.1. The Strategic Space

From the global strategic point of view the waters which border the meridional aspect of the Iberian Peninsula have commanded a high geostrategic value. This has increased in importance since the formation of the world bipolar model which emerged after the second world war. The cause: The Strait of Gibraltar, strangulation point for all maritime traffic which traverse what has been called the «economic equator» since the completion of the Suez and Panama Canals<sup>2</sup>.

During the entire period of the Cold War the Mediterranean was characterised as one of the areas of greatest friction between the two blocs and consequently by its high degree of militarisation. But, above all, the Mediterranean world constituted what has been called the crossroads of the «Four Worlds»: western democracies, communist regimes, oil producing countries, and underdeveloped countries<sup>3</sup>. Since the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the consequent disappearance of the Bloc policy the Mediterranean is no longer the scene of East-West confrontation. However it has subsequently become the scenario for North-South convergence. A union with nuances of separatism once the European Union, after the latest incorporations, has acquired greater cohesion and developed into an economic-political bloc. Thus the Mediterranean is a basin delimiting the border separating traditionally democratic industrialised countries with aging populations, from the highly populated developing countries inspired by religious radicalism.

In this context Spain has fulfilled the role of the south flank of NATO since the 1970s, particularly considering the formation of the Balearics-Strait-Canaries axis as the spine of the Spanish defence policy since 1980<sup>4</sup>. This role has been reinforced with Spain's integration into the EU (and its means of defence) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Spain, and particularly its meridional border, has become the political (migrational traffic) and customs checkpoint with Africa. On the other hand the Balearic-Strait-Canaries axis not

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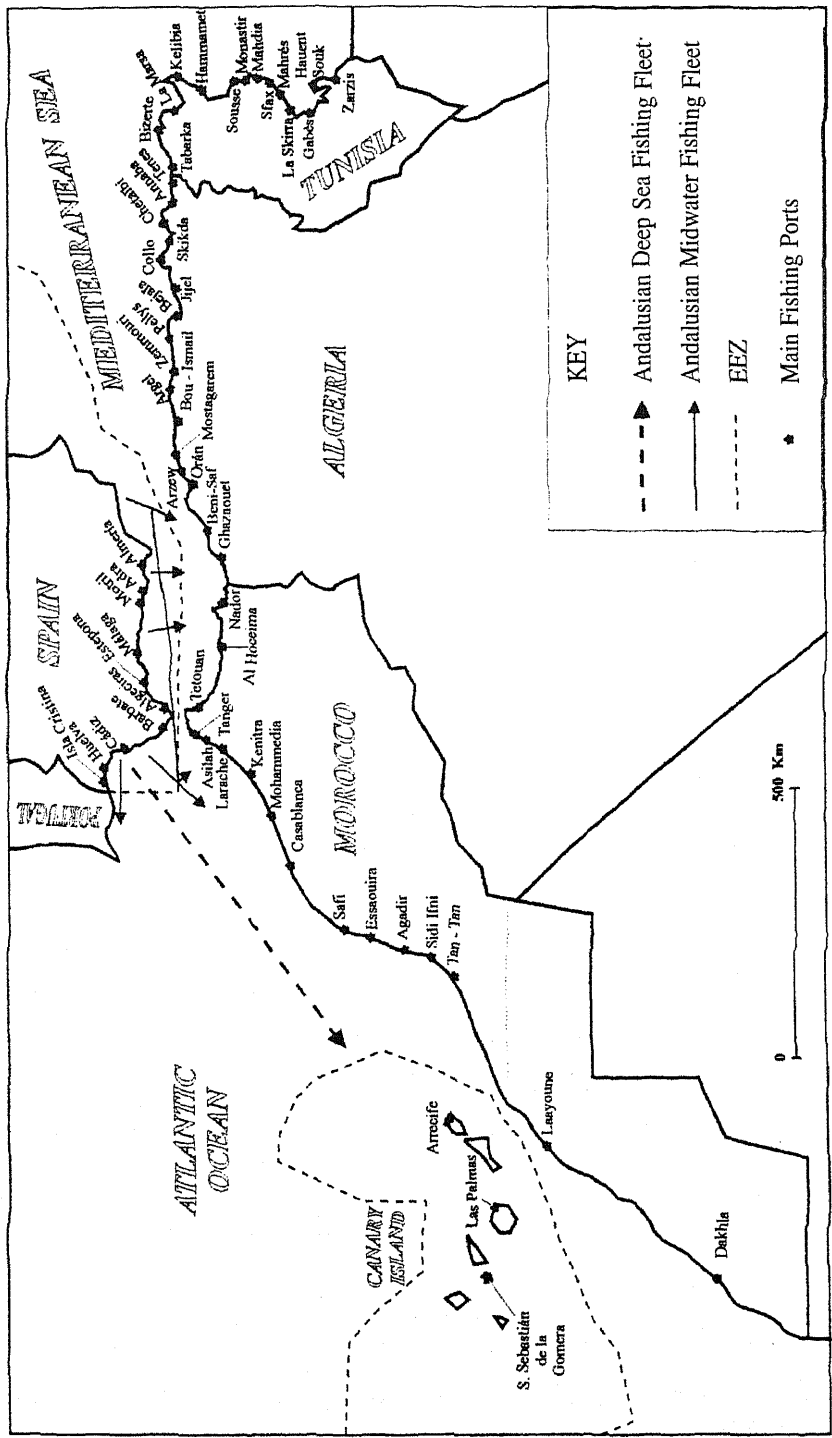
1 MALDONADO, A. (1989): Evolución de las cuencas mediterráneas y reconstrucción detallada de la Paleocenoografía Cenozoica, in MARGALEF, R.: *El Mediterráneo Occidental*, Barcelona: Omega, 18-61.

2 SIEGFRIED, A. (1948): *Suez, Panamá et les routes maritimes mondiales*, Paris: Colin.

3 GASTEYGER, C. (1975): The superpowers in the Mediterranean, *Annales d'Etudes Internationales*, 6, 41-51.

4 SUÁREZ DE VIVERO, J.L. (1985): *El nuevo orden oceánico. Consecuencias territoriales*, Sevilla: Junta de Andalucía, 138-144.

FIGURE 1  
ATLANTIC - MEDITERRANEAN REGION. MARITIME BOUNDARIES AND FISHING HARBOURS



only delimits the Spanish defence space. The strait of Gibraltar acts as a centre of gravity which joins all the Spanish territory, including the two archipelagos. The axis also demarcates the maritime frontier which after the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Figure 1) flows from the Canary Islands to the south of the Balearics and which will become the formal border between the countries of North Africa (Morocco and Algeria) and Spain.

## 1.2. The Resource Sphere

The exploitation of natural resources is an example of the incidence of geopolitical factors manifest in the Spanish-North African relations. This is especially evident in the maritime dimension of the region, and in particular of biological resources, and the evolution of fishing grounds and fishing industry in general over the last few years.

In the Atlantic-Mediterranean region the fishing industry has developed contradictory trends. In the North (particularly Andalusia) the industry is in clear recession, and faces a process of drastic rationalisation. Whilst in the South it is expanding, offering new development opportunities and a new source of protein for a rapidly growing population.

One could even talk about a «substitution process» in relation with the fishing grounds. Activity which formally was vital for numerous Peninsula coastal communities had to be abandoned owing to two circumstances:

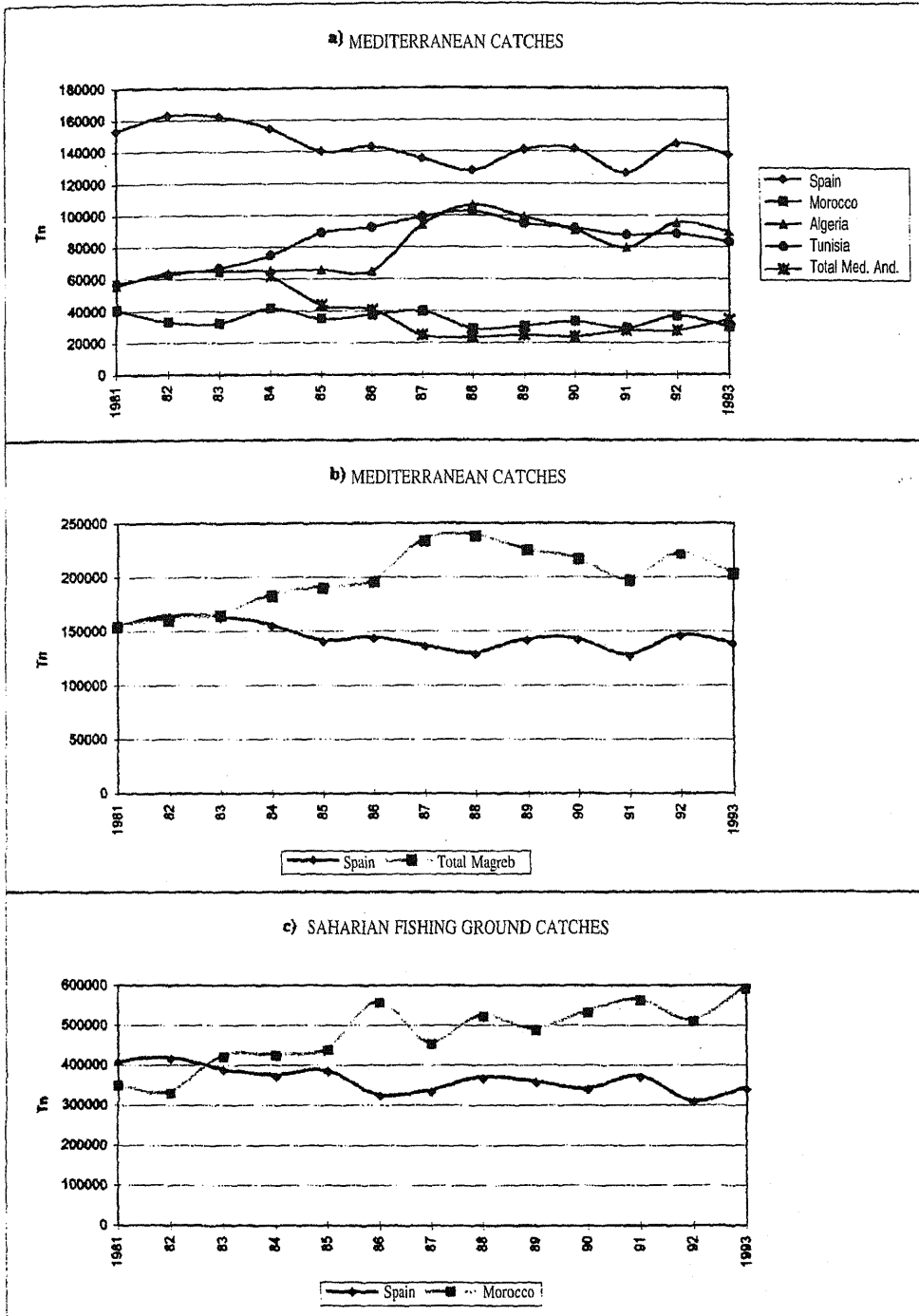
- i) The process of resource nationalisation by the coastal states (creation of exclusive fishing zones and an economic exclusion zone). Additionally, the resources are fundamentally located in close proximity to the North African coast<sup>5</sup>.
- ii) Relocation of economic activity, particularly in the primary sector, owing to the comparative advantages offered by developing countries with lower labour and social costs. In this sense the fishing industry is subject to the same behavioral model as other economic sectors in consequence of the globalisation of the economy.

The growth in catch size in Mediterranean and Atlantic waters illustrates a trend of progressive expansion in the fishery sector (Figure 2). Equally, this trend is exemplified by investment in the modernisation of fishing ports and resource protection measures (quotas, re-stock zones and controlled access to the resources). The growth in the creation of joint ventures and the organisation of financial aid packages available to EU countries affected by the fishery crisis are further indications of phenomena of substitution and relocation of the fishing grounds. North African countries are increasing their participation in the harvesting sector, enlarging fleet, crews and increasing landings to port. Whilst the industrialised countries base their strategies on processing and commercialisation. Coastal communities, highly dependant on the fishing industry, have scarce opportunity of rationalising this

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5 In the Mediterranean, owing to its hydrological and geomorphological peculiarities, (a sea poor in nutrients and a semi-closed basin which is not wider than 400 nautical miles at any point) there have been practically no exclusive economic areas declared. Algeria, however, in 1994 enlarged its exclusive fishing zone to 32 miles to Ras Ténès and from here 52 miles further to its eastern maritime frontier. Morocco created an 70 mile exclusive fishing zone in 1973 and established its exclusive economic area at 200 miles in 1978, but only in relation to Atlantic waters.

FIGURE 2



activity<sup>6</sup>. Therefore conflicts develop, particularly when certain regions of these countries have to compete to maintain their presence in the extractive sector.

### 1.3. Space for Cooperation

Cooperation in the Mediterranean milieu must combine a bilateral viewpoint and multi-lateral experience (Group 5+5, EU-Moroccan relations) with the stimulus to future organisations like the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM).

With the incorporation of Spain and Portugal, the southern expansion of Europe could contribute to understanding and dialogue between Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) and North Europe. Spain, given its bi-continental character, must consolidate its position as mediator between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Essentially there have been three phases in the history of EU-Maghreb relations<sup>7</sup>:

- A) Euro-Arab dialogue (from the 1960s).
- B) Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP), passed in 1972 and put into practice in 1976 (approval of the Cooperation Protocol I) with the objective of contributing to socio-political stability and development in the Mediterranean. To be secured by means of agreements in partnership, or cooperation, with third world Mediterranean countries and incorporating the opening of the European market to industrial products from these countries; a preferential system for agricultural products; economic and technical aid (fourth financial protocol); and a representative board for the negotiations.
- C) Financial cooperation by means of EC bilateral agreements which have been renewed since 1991:
  - I Protocol (1978-81)
  - II Protocol (1982-86)
  - III Protocol (1987-91)

Europe is the greatest contributor of economic aid to almost all of the Maghreb countries. In this region European Community aid represents 17% of the total European aid. However, from the EU and the bilateral donations of member states, North Africa is the recipient of 39% of all aid contributions.

In 1989 the relative failure of the European cooperation policies gave rise to a proposed Policy of Mediterranean Renovation (PMR). Basically the policy was to conform to the following<sup>8</sup>: to accompany the Maghreb economic reforms, to promote private investment, to increase the bilateral public and Community finance (Protocol IV, 1992-96 4.405 million ecus of which 1072 million is destined to Maghreb countries), elimination of problems for southern products in the European market, involvement of the Mediterranean third world countries in the evolution of the Community, and the support of regional projects.

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6 SUÁREZ DE VIVERO, J.L. et al.: Spanish fishing regions and the competition from fishing industry in North Africa, *Sociologia Ruralis*, (in the press).

7 LORCA CORRONS, A.V. y NÚÑEZ VALVERDE, J.A. (1944): España y la cooperación Euro-Magrebí ¿Un motor de desarrollo? en LÓPEZ GARCÍA B. y MONTABES PEREIRA, J. (Eds.): *El Magreb tras la crisis del Golfo: Transformaciones políticas y orden internacional*, Granada: Universidad de Granada, 73-89.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-87.

Cooperation with the south is not only a subject of Mediterranean regional development, but also of European security. The CSCM, together with economic measures, is the best defense for Europe in the Mediterranean, an area where Europe could be most vulnerable without the support of armed forces. It would also be interesting, in this perspective, to create a development bank for the Mediterranean region.

Spanish aid to Maghreb development, though far from the proposed 0.7% GNP, is distributed in the following way (1991 figures)<sup>9</sup>:

— Algeria .....	205 million Pesetas
— Morocco .....	470 million Pesetas
— Tunisia .....	107 million Pesetas
— Mauritania .....	79 million Pesetas

As well as participating in the European policy of cooperation, Spain collaborated through bilateral agreements with Tunisia (1987), Mauritania and Morocco (1989) and in defence matters with Algeria (1989).

The objectives of the Spanish policy of cooperation with the Maghreb countries include the creation of an appropriate framework for the socioeconomic development of the area, committed support of the democratic process and political regulation, and creation of an adequate migration policy<sup>10</sup>.

From a legal-institutional perspective the organisational role of the SECIPI (Secretary General for International Cooperation) must be highlighted along with the budgetary role of PACI (Annual Plan for International Cooperation) as well as the innovation of the AECI (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation), whose central executive is the Institute for Cooperation with the Arab World (ICMA). The Spanish aid is concentrated upon commercial protocols, humanitarian aid or credits (like FAD, Development Aid Fund).

Together with actions outlined in multilateral agreements a bilateral policy exists. This has taken shape in three basic components: FAD funds, official decentralised cooperation, and sectoral cooperation agreements (military, financial, etc.)<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. SPACE FOR THE CIRCULATION OF TRAFFIC

Relations between the extreme south of Europe with the African continent, and in particular Spanish-African relations, are characterised by a geography linking a complex network of spacial relations with the convergence of planetary arcs. After a long history of evolution this area has seen one of the greatest currents of civilization and some of the greatest advances in transport technology.

The Mediterranean has thus been consolidated as a crossroads of two great vectors; latitudinal, in that it is one of the more important routes for container traffic, and meridinal,

9 Ibid., pp. 83-86.

10 ABU-WARDA, N. (1994): *Las transformaciones del Mundo Árabe y sus consecuencias en las relaciones hispano-magrebíes*, CALDUCH, R. (Coord.): *La política Exterior Española en el S. XX*, Madrid: Ediciones de las Ciencias Sociales, S.A., 303-333.

11 ROSÓN ALONSO, A.G.: *Un decenio de cooperación española al desarrollo*, CALDUCH, R. (Coord.): *Op. cit.*, 335-367.

with the possible future development of a physical connection at the Strait of Gibraltar. In both cases, as both Europe's southern-most point and as the Atlantic-Mediterranean Iberian arc, it is emerging as a highly dynamic zone reflecting the tension in both interaction and in migrational pressure over the European continent.

## 2.1. Transport Networks

The consequences of more efficient and direct communication between the European and African continents, so close physically but so distant from a social and cultural point of view, will stimulate greater infrastructural cooperation. The present concern for trans-European transport networks, ie integration of Maghreb space and promotion of a North-South link at the Strait of Gibraltar, illustrates the trend of the development of a global market and communication space.

It is well known that the Gibraltar Strait area, including the Sea of Alboran, has traditionally acted more as a barrier than as a bridge between the two continents and two civilizations. Certainly the movement of commercial traffic, often characterised in this area by breaks in cargo loading and a wide variety of transport methods, is not always efficiently directed. Consequently, both Spain (backed by the EU) and Morocco have firmly agreed to develop the project called Fixed Link.

Factors stimulating the foundation of this project are as follows:

- a) the relative simplicity of the tunnel option, across, of course, the threshold of the strait (maximum depth of 300m)<sup>12</sup>;
- b) technical advances in similar projects (the English Channel tunnel);
- c) the demand for a rapid and efficient means of communication and transport (of passengers and trade);
- d) the establishment of a future global market (Euro-Mediterranean Association)<sup>13</sup>, which requires a transport network capable of organising and integrating European and Maghreb space simultaneously.

In short, it is a question of establishing a series of infrastructural measures (improved methods in regional ports, improved international connections, fixed link at the Strait etc) to enable the processes of cooperation and regional co-development.

In the future all types of communication between the North and South will require a global (regional) vision of transport network development as well as a new concept of the «reconquest» of the Mediterranean space<sup>14</sup>. Consequent lines of action have been proposed<sup>15</sup>:

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12 Consultar información proporcionada por la SEGEG (1994): *El Enlace Fijo del Estrecho de Gibraltar. Un proyecto en estudio*, Madrid.

13 Sobre la Asociación Euro-Mediterránea vid. Comisión de las Comunidades Europeas (Octubre, 1994): *Reforzar la Política Mediterránea de la Unión Europea mediante una asociación euromediterránea*, Bruselas.

14 REYNAUD (Mayo, 1995): Lien fixe Gibraltar et politique méditerranée des transports. Le contexte d'extension des réseaux transeuropéens (TEN) et la formalisation des critères d'évaluation, *IV Coloquio Internacional sobre el Enlace Fijo del Estrecho de Gibraltar*, Sevilla, 351 y ss.

15 ACIMAN, S. (1995): Las relaciones Europa-Magreb en el horizonte 2000, *IV Coloquio Internacional sobre el Enlace Fijo del Estrecho de Gibraltar*, Sevilla, 365-367.



- Development of North-South and inter-Maghreb infrastructures associated with themes such as legal-institutional reconciliation and general economic development.
- Creation of a database of regional interaction.
- Cooperation with projects and research on transport and commercial matters.
- Technology transfer.
- Global European-Maghreb cooperation (at economic, political and legal levels).

The alternative is a scene of regional cooperation and development in stark contrast to the actual situation of sociopolitical instability. Future regional transport projects will, without doubt, play an important part in three inter-related areas: human relations, commercial traffic (in the regional markets), and cooperation in general.

**Table 1**  
TRAFFIC EUROPE-AFRICA

	Passengers (mill)			Trade (mill. metric tons)		
	1990	2005	2025	1990	2005	2025
STUDY AREA*	14.58	23.64	35.37	31.63	56.27	96.14
GIBRALTAR STRAIT CORRIDOR	3.69	10.61	18.62	0.65	3.98	7.95
FIXED LINK	—	6.07	10.67	—	3.79	7.56
DIVERTED	—	4.25	7.58	—	3.52	6.28
GENERATED	—	0.59	0.97	—	0.18	0.32
CREATED	—	1.22	2.1	—	0.09	0.96

Source: SECEG (1994).

\* Europe and a large part of Africa. With reference to trade, almost all African countries north of the equator.

## 2.2. Commercial flows and exchanges

The Atlantic-Mediterranean basin, a strategic maritime area, plays a dual role from the commercial traffic perspective. Firstly, it is an area of long distance East-West (and vice versa) shipping lines, and on the other hand it is a region privileged with numerous contacts with Europe.

A marked North-South contrast is prevalent in the commercial activity, as with other aspects, due mainly to the greater cargo capacity of the coastal Mediterranean countries<sup>16</sup>. A definite commercial traffic structure has evolved in which the North exports industrial and nutritional products whereas the South exports energy and agricultural products. Practically 90% of this trade is achieved via maritime means<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Europa Occ. (30%); Magreb y Siria (5%). Vid. GRENON, M. y BATISSE, M (Eds.) (1989): *Futures for the Mediterranean Basin. The Blue Plan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 172.

<sup>17</sup> Institut Français de la Mer (1993): *Transports de marchandise sur les grands axes européens-Recherche de routes alternatives terre-mer*, Aôut.

Although figures are not always the key to a study, a brief quantification could greatly clarify the interactions throughout the south-western Mediterranean area<sup>18</sup>:

- North-South Exports: manufactured products (more than 6000 million ecus) and foodstuffs (1200 million ecus).
- Exports from Maghreb: Algerian energy products (5000 million ecus), Moroccan manufactured products (1500 million ecus) and foodstuffs (685 million ecus).

Briefly, we can confirm (see table 2) that Algeria is the Maghreb country with most interaction with Europe, although this is fundamentally due to its energy production. Total Spanish trade with Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia (2.1 million metric tons), despite physical proximity and relative ease of maritime traffic, is less than that of other Mediterranean European States<sup>19</sup>.

**Table 2**  
TRAFFIC EUROPE-MAGHREB  
(EXPORT + IMPORT) IN MILLIONS METRIC TONS.

	SPAIN	FRANCE	ITALY	TOTALS
MOROCCO	0.6	1.1	0.4	2.1
ALGERIA	0.9	1.1	1.2	3.2
TUNISIA	0.6	1.3	0.6	2.5
MAGHREB	2.1	3.5	2.2	7.8

Source: SECEG - CETMO I, 1991.

The present, and possible future, commercial traffic trends could be as follows:

- a) increased specialisation in Maghreb exports and trade deficit with the North;
- b) the growth of Euro-Maghreb trade (almost 8 million metric tons) through the «Western Corridor» - 15% of this figure handled by Spanish ports, or at least crossing our national territory;
- c) the predominance of maritime transportation, but with emphasis on the growing role of submarine pipeline transportation (gas pipeline, electrical energy);
- d) Alboran Sea traffic passes through both Northern (Algeciras, Malaga,...), and Southern coastal ports (Nador, Oran,...), backed by large international companies;
- e) a large part of this traffic is made up of Algerian energy products, Moroccan phosphates and manufactured goods, and also Spanish iron and steel products<sup>20</sup>;

18 CETMO (I) (Junio, 1991): Estudios sobre las tendencias del comercio en el Mediterráneo Occidental y sobre las nuevas estrategias de transporte entre el sur de Europa y el Magreb en el horizonte de 1993, 16.

19 Ibid., pp. 37 y ss.

20 CETMO (II) (1991): *L'acheminement des marchandises diverses entre le Maroc et l'Europe*, 16-17.

- f) there are good prospects for strong growth in Andalusia, the pivotal area in North-South interaction, if authentic regional cooperation and commercial diversification were achieved in the Maghreb (this positive trend could be strengthened by the Fixed Link project);
- g) the alternative future will be between commercial conflict and the formation of cooperative space and a «Strait without frontiers»<sup>21</sup>.

The latter trend has been consolidated after the commitment adopted at the Barcelona Conference toward the progressive institution of a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in the Mediterranean, culminating in 2010.

### 2.3. The Migratory Flows

The Maghreb is now in Spain. Our country has been, until well into the twentieth century, characterised by emigration and as zone of transit for Africans into Europe. However, the Maghreb people come to Spain as if it were the new El Dorado, and this situation, given Spain's geographical position as the South's closest entry-point to the West, is one of Europe's and Spain's principal preoccupations.

It is well known that emigration is, effectively, the result of imbalance. Lack of jobs and opportunities in the Maghreb countries, the political framework and social instability, and stimuli from the European communicative media are some of the causes of immigration from the North of Africa. Demographic pressure can be added to this economic attraction; according to United Nations estimates in the year 2025 the population of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia will reach 120 million inhabitants. Although we cannot forget that the birthrate will drop to below 2% and that since the 1980s the actual number of births has been decreasing. However, at the moment the annual birth rate is at 3%, making available an important number of young people.

Such inequality has led to the migration of Maghrebis to our country although, at the moment, the Spanish immigration figures are much lower than European levels. Whilst the average percentage of foreigners in neighbouring countries is at 4.5%, in Spain it hasn't reached 1% (484,342 according to official sources, and up to 800,000 following various estimates). Of these only around 70,000 (less than 15%) stem from the North of Africa (Migration Yearbook, 1994).

This arrival of immigrants, although moderate, has generated what we could call a visual impact. Caused mainly by the permanent settlement of these collectives thanks to the policy of family regrouping and integration.

Due to the existing containment policy many immigrants find themselves with illegal status, inducing them to join the black economy. They thereby become a source of cheap labour, although the impact upon the labour market tends to be exaggerated. In Spain only 120,000 foreigners possess work permits (38% are Maghrebis) and mostly take up work in the service sector (48%), above all domestic service and itinerant hawking; agriculture

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21 Vid. III (1990): *Coloquio Internacional sobre el Enlace Fijo del Estrecho de Gibraltar*, Marrakech (diversas comunicaciones).

(12%); construction (12%) and industry (9%) (Labour Statistics Yearbook, 1994). None being desirable occupations sought by the Spanish population.

The support for curbing immigration, despite the present small number of immigrants in our country and labour market, has added to the scale of the problem. A negative attitude towards foreigners has been produced, as well as a growing inclination to blame them for certain socioeconomic problems. Thus, almost always, inducing immigrants to confine themselves to their own groups as a form of defence and affirmation.

This situation is provoking harsh social repercussions, or even conflict between civilizations according to Samuel P. Huntington's thesis<sup>22</sup>. In this work he refers to the violent reactions provoked by the initial contact between groups of immigrants and the population of the destination country. Later comes reactionary radicalism from both sides.

Despite this one can assert that a common migration policy does not exist, only attempts at coordination concentrated in organising control measures and intergovernmental agreements (Schengen Treaty and Dublin Agreement). The actual initiatives, agreed at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Barcelona, have tended to increase cooperation in order to reduce migratory pressure through programmes of professional training, and aid for the creation of employment. There have been bids to forge better protection in the area of illegal immigration. In this context, the members, conscious of their responsibility regarding repatriation, have agreed to adopt, through accords or bilateral settlements, the appropriate provisions and measures for the repatriation of their nationals found in an illegal situation. However, the commitments adopted with the Declaration of Barcelona still have a long way to go to obtain the desired results.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the medium term, the geopolitical relations between Spain and North Africa in the next century will already be defined in geographical terms; a framework which will be delimited by the new maritime frontiers. And in the infrastructures through which raw materials (gas pipelines), energy (high tension submarine cables), and possibly goods and people (Fixed Link) will flow.

The intensification of meridional traffic flows and interactions will be unavoidable; as will tension undoubtedly generated by rapprochement, economic, political and cultural contact and relocation of the means of production. The possibility of conflict is high resulting from the repercussions that such tensions can create. But this is correlative to the emergence of new opportunities associated with the increase of accessibility in the region.

Therefore, in this area characterised by intense relations and high volumes of interaction, a new framework of cooperation needs to be developed. One which, utilising supranational instruments, is capable of implementing an efficient arrangement of space and of the protection and conservation of resources and the environment.

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<sup>22</sup> Vid. HUNTINGTON, S. (1993): El conflicto entre civilizaciones, próximo campo de batalla, *ABC Cultural* (2-VII-1993), 16-26 (Versión original publicada en *Foreign Affairs*).