
THE EVOLVING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Despite many points of diversity, the Mediterranean security environment as a whole is characterized by some important shared concerns in north-south terms. It is also characterized by marked differences in perspective. These differences may to some extent be explained by varying strategic traditions and historical experiences. Yet two realities stand out: the relative insecurity of the southern Mediterranean as a region, and the primacy of internal security concerns for states in the south. NATO members can be affected, directly and indirectly, by these realities.

**A CONVERGENCE OF SECURITY PERCEPTIONS
IN THE NORTH**

Post-Cold War Europe is, with some notable exceptions such as the Balkans, a benign region in security terms. Threats to territorial integrity are few or nonexistent. Broader risks to security and prosperity emanating from outside Europe do exist, and are part of evolving debates on both sides of the Atlantic. But hard, military risks to member states are no longer considered pressing and immediate challenges for public policy in most societies within the Alliance. Sources of longer-term strategic unease, including the stability and behavior of Russia, have yet to acquire a tangible “hard” security flavor—except notably in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, where Russian arms and technology transfers are a factor in military balances.

In notable respects the security environment now facing NATO as a whole resembles the environment confronting Alliance “Southern

Region” states during the Cold War—a diversity of concerns rather than a unifying threat, few direct risks to territory, a focus on the comprehensive security of societies, and the centrality of power-projection issues in relations with the United States. This convergence in security perceptions among Alliance members has done a great deal to remove longstanding differences between the northern and southern members of NATO. It has been facilitated by the progressive movement of NATO's southern allies toward the European mainstream in political and economic terms. Turkey, despite its difficulties, has also moved in this direction over the last decade.

As a result, discussion of Mediterranean security and strategy is now of growing interest to the Alliance as a whole. The southern European countries traditionally active in Mediterranean affairs have become more active and capable, and have been joined by countries such as Germany and Britain whose Cold War era concerns lay elsewhere. Even the United States, a European and Middle Eastern power with a longstanding engagement in the Mediterranean, has begun to consider the utility of a more specific Mediterranean policy. To the extent that power-projection concerns play a more central role in NATO strategy, even for traditional NATO missions, the United States is likely to focus even more on relations with member and nonmember states around the Mediterranean as a contribution to European as well as Middle Eastern security.

THE CONTINUED PRIMACY OF INTERNAL CONCERNS IN THE SOUTH

The environment in the south is less benign, with multiple sources of insecurity. Societies across the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean are experiencing rapid and uneven economic change. Virtually all of these societies face political challenges capable of altering their longer-term internal and foreign policy orientation. States within the Alliance are not immune to these challenges, but the processes of change within them are far less tumultuous. For the foreseeable future, security agendas in the south will be driven to a considerable extent by internal security concerns. In some countries, such as Algeria, the problem of internal security continues to dominate virtually all aspects of public policy.

The 1998 RAND report¹ on the Mediterranean Initiative noted the tension between stability and change in the southern Mediterranean and the open questions concerning the short- and long-term implications of economic reform in developing societies. Economic crises in Asia, Russia, and Latin America place these questions in sharper relief around the Mediterranean, especially in relation to those Mediterranean Dialogue states engaged in active economic reform programs. As discussed in Chapter Five, more modest expectations regarding the EU's Barcelona Initiative may also influence the outlook for investment, economic growth, and, perhaps, stability in the south.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECENT CRISES

In the period since our last report, three crises—two new and one ongoing—have unfolded, with important implications for the Mediterranean. First, the crisis in Kosovo, and the NATO response, has special meaning in the Mediterranean context. Like Bosnia, the crisis engaged the interest of decisionmakers and publics on both sides of the Mediterranean. Lack of a Western response in Kosovo would very likely have led to strong criticism in Muslim states, especially among those who fear a “civilizational” evolution of relations on Europe's periphery. At the same time, NATO's intervention in Kosovo has had the effect of extending and reinforcing the Alliance's out-of-area vocation.

The crisis posed difficult dilemmas from a Mediterranean perspective. On the one hand, NATO policy in the Balkans is broadly in alignment with views across the Mediterranean, where popular affinities are engaged on behalf of Muslim communities. On the other hand, the approach to Kosovo suggests a vision of the Alliance—more active outside the Treaty area, more willing to use force in internal crises, and possibly willing to do so without a clear mandate from the international community—that may trouble skeptics in the south. More positively, the Kosovo crisis may encourage wider recognition of the need for closer cooperation

¹F. Stephen Larrabee, Jerrold Green, Ian O. Lesser, and Michele Zanini, *NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-957-IMD, 1998.

between NATO and southern Mediterranean states in response to regional problems. The involvement of nonmember Mediterranean states in the IFOR/SFOR operations in Bosnia also pointed in this direction.

Second, the rolling crisis with Iraq and the air and cruise missile strikes of December 1998 placed other Mediterranean security issues in sharper relief. The crisis with Iraq has been, in large measure, about the containment of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs. It has come against a background of rising attention to proliferation challenges on the European periphery.² The implications of Iraq's unconventional military capabilities for relations with neighbors in the Middle East also cannot be ignored by Arab states such as Egypt and Jordan, among others. The crisis highlighted the clear differences in perspective and policy among key Western allies, and, like Kosovo, the striking gap in capacity for the projection of military power between the United States and its allies. These issues would also arise in potential crises around the Mediterranean, where the United States remains an overwhelmingly important military actor, but where the disparity in power-projection capabilities may be less pronounced. Recent EU and NATO initiatives on enhancing the European capacity for military operations, coupled with the precedents of UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations in Albania (Operation Alba) and the predominance of European forces in KFOR, may suggest a more balanced transatlantic security relationship on the European periphery—that is, in the Mediterranean, but not necessarily in regions further afield, such as the Gulf and the Caucasus/Caspian.

The Iraq crisis also reinforced the experience of the Gulf War with regard to public (and much elite) opinion in North Africa and the Middle East. Leaderships may be pragmatic and find considerable strategic rationale for the containment of revolutionary regimes like Iraq. But there continues to be considerable sympathy for Baghdad in its confrontation with the West and, above all, the United States. The primacy of internal security concerns inevitably dictates a policy

²See Thanos Dokos, "Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Threat to NATO's Southern Flank: An Assessment of Options," NATO Research Fellowship, Final Report, June 1998; and Ian O. Lesser and Ashley J. Tellis, *Strategic Exposure: Proliferation Around the Mediterranean*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-742-A, 1996.

of considerable caution in southern Mediterranean capitals (Israel has its own very different reasons for caution). Similar reactions could be expected in relation to other potential scenarios involving, for example, Libya or Syria. Moreover, policy differences over Iraq are hardly limited to north-south lines, and the existence of transatlantic differences further complicates the southern Mediterranean calculus in relation to Western interventions in the Middle East.

Third, the evolution of the Algerian crisis is significant for the Mediterranean environment as well as the climate for NATO's Mediterranean Initiative. Arguably, the crisis in Algeria inspired or gave impetus to several Mediterranean initiatives. Since the early 1990s, it has driven concerns about the stability of societies facing demographic, economic, and political pressures across the region, and particularly in the western and central Mediterranean. Algeria in the first half of the decade was seen as emblematic of the challenge posed by radical Islamic politics to established regimes. Against this background, policymakers and observers around the Mediterranean focused on the potential for large-scale refugee flows, interruptions of increasingly important energy flows, and the spillover of radical Islam elsewhere in North Africa.

The crisis in Algeria, however violent and troubling, has evolved along different lines than originally anticipated, with rather different implications for the Mediterranean. Informed observers now agree that with the recent decline in violence, the residual turmoil in Algeria is largely divorced from any systematic political or religious agenda. Much violence appears tied to power struggles within the government and the security establishment, as well as within the Islamist opposition. Vendettas and economic terrorism also appear to play roles. The risk today is less the prospect of a revolution and the advent of a radical "fundamentalist" regime than continued violence and instability within a key regional state. To this danger might be added the risk of a more vigorous Algerian nationalism that could threaten the security of its neighbors.³

³Recent Algerian arms agreements with Russia, Belarus, and South Africa, including the planned acquisition of 36 Mig-29s, are likely to raise regional concerns about the country's military capability.

Fears of disastrous refugee flows as a result of the Algerian crisis have, similarly, failed to materialize. Instead, there have been spillovers of terrorism and political violence related to Algeria in France and elsewhere in western Europe. Together with the bombing of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, these incidents and the continuing potential for terrorism within Europe by Algerian networks will provide a tangible context for counter-terrorism discussions within NATO and within the Mediterranean Dialogue.

Developments in Algeria, and the opportunity for further evolution offered by leadership changes and prospective amnesty arrangements, are encouraging a reassessment of the crisis and regional responses. Whether the violence in Algeria can be definitively contained remains an open question. Terrorism in Algeria has imposed a form of isolation on a key regional state. NATO and its Dialogue partners should consider whether the evolution of the Algerian problem allows for a constructive dialogue with Algiers, or whether the crisis brings too much hard security “baggage” to a fledgling cooperative security agenda in the Mediterranean (this issue is taken up in greater detail in Chapter Six). Concern over the consequences of the Algerian crisis served as a general stimulus to Mediterranean initiatives in the 1990s. The impasse in Algeria, in the absence of any dramatic escalation of the crisis, has allowed attention to shift to security challenges elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Thus, discussions about Mediterranean security that had been framed around stability in the western and central Mediterranean are increasingly shaped by events further east—in the Aegean, Cyprus, and the Levant—where security problems are “harder” and more military in nature, and where some of the more active participants in Mediterranean diplomacy are to be found.

TRANSREGIONAL LINKAGES

Recent developments and discussions point to the centrality of transregional links in the Mediterranean security environment. Our 1998 report highlighted several issues encouraging the interdependence of European, Middle Eastern, and North African security. It is worth revisiting and elaborating on some of these issues, including proliferation, energy security, refugee flows, and the Middle East peace process.

It has become fashionable to observe that within a decade major southern European population centers will be within range of ballistic missiles that could be deployed around the Mediterranean basin and in the Middle East. Turkey is already exposed to ballistic missile risks from its Middle Eastern neighbors. Other southern members of NATO face less clear-cut but potentially growing exposure. We have discussed proliferation trends as an issue binding together European and Middle Eastern security and highlighting Europe's potential vulnerability to the retaliatory consequences of allied policy around the Mediterranean and beyond. Two further implications of this trend are worth noting.

First, an important change may arise in NATO's treatment of WMD and missile proliferation as a strategic issue as the geographic exposure of the Alliance progresses to include major member states in central and western Europe. American concern about this issue, as a direct security risk and as a constraint on United States and coalition freedom of action, has pushed proliferation issues to the forefront in alliance debates about future missions. The new Strategic Concept document treats the proliferation challenge in a less ambitious manner than some had envisioned, but proliferation risks and the debate on addressing them are now permanently operating factors in the Mediterranean environment.

Second, proliferation risks are, ultimately, a shared challenge in north-south terms. A generalized tendency exists in Western strategic studies circles to portray WMD and missile proliferation as a risk flowing from south to north. There can be little question that unconventional weapons may give less capable southern states the means to pursue "asymmetric" strategies in confrontations with the West. No less significant (and perhaps more significant in terms of the motives for proliferation), WMDs and the means for their delivery at longer range—aircraft and cruise missiles as well as ballistic missiles—give substantial weight to regional competitors *within* the south. Diverse examples include Iran, Iraq, Libya and its neighbors, and Israel and its neighbors. Algeria's nuclear program was, arguably, an expression first and foremost of the country's sense of its own regional role. As a result, the most likely victims of missile and WMD use are in the south. Indeed, most existing cases of such use

have occurred in the context of south-south conflicts.⁴ From the perspective of the Mediterranean Initiative, the controversial issue of proliferation is still worth treating on its merits, but also as an example of a shared risk.

Developments in the area of energy routes and energy security are also reinforcing north-south interdependence in the Mediterranean region. Much attention has been devoted to the outlook for Caspian energy resources and the geopolitical consequences of alternative transport routes. Recent analyses suggest that the contribution of Caspian resources to world energy supply will be important, although more modest than sometimes portrayed. Nonetheless, the development of the region's oil and gas will give Europe and the United States a greater stake in events in the eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and central Asia. In the years ahead, developments to the east of Turkey and around the Black Sea may be seen as an integral part of the wider Mediterranean security environment. Balkan states, including Greece, will also have a stake in decisions regarding longer-term transport routes for Caspian oil. Both the Black Sea route and the proposed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline would contribute to the role of the Mediterranean as an energy entrepôt.

Less attention has been devoted to the growing reliance of Mediterranean and southern European states on North African gas. Europe has become dependent on North Africa for some 25 percent of its gas requirements, with far higher levels of dependence in France and southern Europe. Spain already relies on Algeria for roughly 40 percent of its supply. Portugal is similarly dependent. These figures are likely to increase significantly over the next decade as gas continues to be a fuel of choice and as new pipelines are developed. Most of this supply reaches Europe through two routes, the Trans-Med line linking Italy and North Africa, and the new Trans-Maghreb pipeline supplying Algerian gas to Spain and Portugal (as well as France, Belgium, and Germany) via Morocco. Planning is underway to expand the existing Libya-Italy link, and to provide Libyan gas to Egypt. In the eastern Mediterranean new gas routes are planned to

⁴For example, the "war of the cities" during the Iran-Iraq conflict, Iraq's Scud attacks during the Gulf War (although a south-north dimension clearly existed in this case as well—and Israel is, arguably, part of the north), and the Yemeni civil war.

link the Gulf, Turkey, and Israel. New pipelines from the Caucasus and central Asia may eventually provide gas to eastern and central Europe.⁵ As a result, by the early 21st century “Europe will be profoundly tied into the Mediterranean region by its dependence on energy supplies.”⁶ And unlike oil, the gas market remains regional rather than global, with much fixed infrastructure and far less flexibility to respond to supply interruptions.

These new links bind together the economic and security futures of diverse states around the Mediterranean. As NATO’s Mediterranean Initiative evolves, energy security is likely to be a rising item on the agenda for dialogue. Interests in this issue are shared—it has many “soft security” as well as technical dimensions—and NATO may find itself compelled to think more seriously about the defense of common energy security interests. In the case of North African gas, cross-border links may well contribute to economic interdependence, stability, and even confidence-building. The risks to regional gas supply are far more likely to flow from turmoil in producer or transit states than from deliberate cutoffs. More problematic from the perspective of the Initiative is the key role played by Algeria and Libya in this equation, and the difficulty, especially in the case of Libya, of bringing these countries into the Dialogue.

Migration is another leading challenge linking the security of states on both sides of the Mediterranean. Stringent policies in Europe, and some improvement in the demographic situation to the south, have resulted in a migration picture falling well short of the dramatic scenarios many observers predicted earlier in the decade. Yet, the demographic and economic gap between north and south continues to widen in the Mediterranean region, and immigration remains a highly politicized issue in Europe. As our last report discussed, the security aspects of this question arguably have as much to do with the controversial notion of “security of identity,” i.e., cultural fears, as with more tangible economic considerations.⁷ The progressive

⁵George Joffé, “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Two Years After Barcelona,” Middle East Programme *Briefing* (London: RIIA), No. 44, May 1998, p.2.

⁶Joffé, p.2.

⁷On the question of “security of identity,” see the discussion in Fernanda Faria and Alvaro de Vasconcelos, “Security in North Africa: Ambiguity and Reality,” *Chaillot Paper No. 25*, Paris: WEU Institute for Security Studies, September 1996.

reduction of border controls within Europe has also had the effect of shifting responsibility for the control of illegal migration to states on the European periphery. Discussion of migration issues will undoubtedly remain central to relations between north and south in the Mediterranean, but is likely to be difficult and inappropriate for NATO to take up with Dialogue partners.

The challenge of sudden, disastrous refugee flows is a feature of the Mediterranean security environment. This issue has been especially evident in southeastern Europe (e.g., in the Balkans and across the Adriatic), but potentially large refugee movements can be envisioned elsewhere, from North Africa to the Caucasus. Cooperation in managing these crises is likely to emerge as an increasingly central task for NATO, as well as for non-NATO Mediterranean states. Moreover, this is not simply a north-south issue. Several Dialogue countries face refugee problems on their own borders, in some cases from their own "south." Unlike the general issue of migration, the control of unanticipated refugee flows is an issue that can usefully be addressed within the NATO Dialogue.

Lastly, developments in the Middle East peace process continue to influence the overall security environment in the Mediterranean, and have traditionally inhibited progress on all Mediterranean initiatives. The outlook following the 1999 Israeli elections remains an open question, although there are now some new and very positive signs. Beyond the effects of "stalled peace"—not to mention reversals in the peace process—on the general climate for dialogue, the status of the bilateral and multilateral tracks of the process has had more specific negative consequences for the NATO Initiative. Key issues, such as the question of WMD proliferation, become difficult to address in north-south terms, just as the evolution of NATO's own strategy makes it all the more important to do so. The confidence-building objectives of the Dialogue lose much of their potential value in the absence of a true multilateral (rather than multi-bilateral) framework for the Initiative. This is especially true because many of the most serious security problems in the region are south-south rather than north-south in nature. New progress in the peace process could facilitate critical, multilateral dialogue.

Frustration over the state of the peace process has also complicated transatlantic approaches to the region.⁸ From an American perspective, Mediterranean initiatives have often been perceived as distracting elements in the Middle East equation. A more active EU, pursuing a more ambitious Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), is likely to seek a more central political role in the process in accordance with its economic contributions. Indeed, Europe is likely to see the environment in the Middle East, including the Arab-Israeli dispute and North African issues, as part of a wider Mediterranean complex affecting European security and prosperity. Progress toward the resolution of Arab-Israeli disputes would have a transforming effect on the outlook for NATO's Mediterranean Initiative, as well as the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

THREE MODELS OF MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY

One of the leading factors in the evolution of the strategic environment in the Mediterranean will be the future of NATO's own approach to the region and individual states in the south. The state of this debate and likely outcomes are taken up below. But several models of Mediterranean security are worthy of consideration, each of which has distinctive implications for NATO strategy and the character of the Mediterranean Initiative.⁹ The models are not mutually exclusive and the future environment is likely to reflect elements of each.

The first model is evolutionary and views the Mediterranean as a natural extension of the European space, albeit one with growing significance for European security. In this conception, the Mediterranean is essentially seen as Europe's "near abroad"—a place of special interest in political, economic, and defense terms. This model is potentially well-balanced in transatlantic terms, as the EU will continue to be an overwhelmingly important actor in the future devel-

⁸See Philip H. Gordon, *The Transatlantic Allies and the Changing Middle East*, Adelphi Paper No. 322, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998.

⁹For further discussion of these models, see Ian O. Lesser, "The Changing Mediterranean Security Environment: A Transatlantic Perspective," in George Joffé, ed., *Perspectives on Development: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, London: Frank Cass, 1999.

opment of the region. Even in military terms, areas such as North Africa and the Balkans are close enough geographically for Europe to play a leading role in crisis management. For NATO, this model is limited enough to fall within consensus notions of the future scope and role of the Alliance (many of the future functional missions for NATO, including peacekeeping, are far more likely to be performed on Europe's southern periphery than in central and eastern Europe). This near-abroad model is, in many respects, descriptive of the prevailing approach in NATO as well as the EU. From the perspective of southern Mediterranean states, this model implies the uncomfortable idea that new risks are emanating from the south, but it also suggests more active Western involvement in addressing the south's internal and regional problems—problems that cannot be addressed effectively without attention from across the Mediterranean.

A second model is more global in nature and, in political terms, views a more active transatlantic approach to the Mediterranean as a logical first step toward a broader security partnership extending to areas beyond the Mediterranean basin. The Mediterranean in this conception is seen as a “strategic waypoint.” In defense terms, this model emphasizes power projection, and is for that reason relatively U.S.-centered. It may also imply a more active role for Europe in the Middle East and the Gulf, as well as closer transatlantic cooperation with countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Geopolitically, this model is a conception that looks to areas of interest beyond the Mediterranean basin itself, including the Gulf, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This approach to Mediterranean security is difficult for southern states (with the exception of Israel) to accept without reservation, even where longer-term interests may coincide, as in the Gulf. Public acceptance problems suggest that this model is one that NATO's Dialogue partners will wish to hold at arm's length.

The third model treats the Mediterranean as, above all, a theater for relations between north and south in security terms. Here, the strategic thrust is to promote dialogue and cooperation to forestall frictions and conflict along “civilizational” or have-and-have-not lines. In a practical sense, and for European and transatlantic institutions, this approach can go beyond confidence-building to focus on policy issues that require active north-south cooperation—for example, trade and migration, but also counter-terrorism and energy security. To the extent that NATO becomes more active in addressing prob-

lems on the periphery of Europe—implicit in the two previous models—this cooperative, north-south approach becomes more important as a means of balancing what might otherwise be seen very negatively around the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The development of the NATO Initiative has been informed principally by this north-south model, and is part of the geopolitical tradition that views the Mediterranean as a bridge rather than a barrier.¹⁰ Ultimately, this model provides a far less controversial basis for security cooperation in the Mediterranean, and can help to reduce suspicion regarding those aspects of U.S. and European strategy informed by the near-abroad and strategic-waypoint models.

¹⁰The classic formulation of this idea was offered by Fernand Braudel in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, New York: Harper, 1973 (first published 1949). Other initiatives in this tradition include the proposed Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), the 5+5 Dialogue between the Arab Maghreb Union and southern European states, the Mediterranean Forum, and of course, the EU's Barcelona Initiative.