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**WESTERN-MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY RELATIONS:  
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

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## **1. Introduction**

Speaking about issues and challenges of Western-Mediterranean security relations means, first of all, reflecting about the achievements of the Western-Mediterranean policy in the past. A realistic look at Western-Mediterranean security relations in the past decade contributes to a realistic outlook for the future of this relationships.

Instead of giving an overview over the activities of NATO, WEU, EU and OSCE it seems to be much more appropriate to evaluate the pros and cons of western-Mediterranean policy in a general way. This paper argues that the results of Western-Mediterranean security cooperation are – due to several reasons – very poor. Ten years after the Italian-Spanish CSCM initiative not much has been achieved to establish closer cooperation between western institutions and southern Mediterranean rim states. It is often argued that the Middle East peace process is the main obstacle for a closer cooperation and that Western-Mediterranean security relations need to be decoupled from the peace process. Instead of following this traditional line of argumentation this paper argues that the obstacles are also due to a lack of a common perception and common interests of western countries in the Mediterranean.

In a second step this paper will focus on the future issues and challenges of Western-Mediterranean security relations. I claim that in the future, despite security issues like the proliferation of WMD, illegal migration, inter- and intrastate conflicts and terrorism, developments within the Atlantic Alliance and the EU will pose a problem for Western-Mediterranean security relations. To be more concrete. The development of a European Reaction Forces as well as the discussion about NMD or MD or AMD will have a profound effect on the relations between “the west” and the southern Mediterranean rim states. If western institutions want to avoid the deterioration of the existing frameworks they have to be adopted.

Thirdly, I will focus on future possibilities of improving the security relations between western institutions and countries from North-Africa and the Middle and Near East

## **2. Ten years after**

Soberly speaking one must realize that neither the institutionalized dialogues of NATO, EU, WEU and OSZE nor the various bilateral relationships around the Mediterranean have “adjusted to reflect the new post-Cold War” (Lesser 2000: 55) security environment. Only some members of the Western institutions perceive security developments in the Mediterranean as of vital importance for their national security. Other member states are still regarding such developments as far less problematic or as non-existent. Thus, the geo-strategic consensus which characterized Western security politics during the East-West-Conflict (also in the Mediterranean) does not longer exists. In Southern Europe this lead to rising concerns. Considering the numerous crisis-phenomena in the southern Mediterranean area, and the multiple social and economic

interconnections between the European and the Non-European Mediterranean countries, the worries can hardly be dismissed.

The creation of the ambitious Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the modest NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue, were clearly demanded and advocated by the Southern Europeans who were vigorously trying to bring into life a political entity that is called Mediterranean region but still today does not exist.

But the results of both initiatives are due to several reasons very poor – not to speak of the OSCE and WEU. The problems are obvious:

- there is a lack of a common perception of the importance of the Mediterranean within the western institutions;
- concerning all security aspects, especially within the EMP, there is a high dependency of the EMP from the regulation of the Middle and Near East conflict. Western-Mediterranean security relations and the Middle East peace process are closely intermingled;
- the co-ordination between southern European states is somewhat arbitrary. There are distinct differences between security priorities of southern Europeans towards the Mediterranean;
- there is an increasing disillusion among southern partner states about the intentions of the institutionalized dialogues;
- meaningful cooperation has not been achieved, at least not in the security field. There is strong resistance on the part of some Arab countries and societies to any cooperation that involves Israel, at least at this stage.
- there is an absence of a common strategic language in the region. Prejudices, conceptual and terminological misunderstandings are prevailing (Echeverria 2000: 1);
- a major problem is the lack of co-ordination between the activities of EU and NATO as well as duplications in the field of security initiatives (Masala 2000: 48-50);

To sum up: The Mediterranean remains marginal into mainstream European security thinking and the region is still not perceived as an integral part of European security.

### **3. New issues and challenges for Western-Mediterranean security relations**

As mentioned in the introduction I argue that despite traditional security challenges the security developments within the Atlantic Alliance as well as within the EU will have an decisive influence on the future Western-Mediterranean security relations, mainly for two reasons.

The intention of the EU expressed 1998 in Saint Maló and 1999 in Cologne to establish a Rapid Reaction Force under the responsibility of the European Council will inevitably increase the still existing mistrust among the southern Mediterranean countries about the intention and the possible areas of action of such a RRF. There is still the existing

perception among Arab elites that the West is pursuing a Mediterranean policy which is not interested in establishing a genuine security system, but mainly interested in creating institutions to monitor the south. These perceptions are going to be reinforced if the EU creates a Rapid Reaction Force without consultation with southern Mediterranean governments. As a result the Western-Mediterranean initiatives which are widely criticized by Arab politicians and the strategic community in the South are going to lose their already low credibility (El-Sayed Selim 1998: 15). And if the European Defense and Security Identity takes place under the conditions of a strategic autonomy from NATO differences between the US and the EU (Rodman 1999) - not only in the Mediterranean – will arise and hamper if not damage Western-Mediterranean policies for the foreseeable future.

And also NATO's New Strategic Concept where NATO's willingness to act without a UN-Mandate is expressed and where the scope for possible future actions of the Alliance is expanded to the Euro-Atlantic periphery and the need to enhance the power-projection capabilities of the Alliance is going to intensify concerns in the southern Mediterranean states that NATO is concentrating on possible future interventions in the southern Mediterranean.

Another possible obstruction of Western-Mediterranean security policy could result from Turkey's position in this context. Ankara has the potential to play a key role in Western- Mediterranean security relations it could - due to its geography – serve as a link between the West and the Mediterranean. But as a Non-EU member Ankara is being more or less excluded from the discussions within the EU about a ESDI. Turkey reacts very harsh and threaten to block every European effort within NATO to use Alliance assets if Turkey is not included in the ESDI decision-making process from the very beginning.

To prevent Turkey from blocking every effort of the EU and NATO in the Mediterranean Turkey's special concerns about the ESDI should be addressed. Failures to address them could not only lead to a more assertive security policy by Ankara but also to the use of a negative veto-power Turkey possesses within NATO. The deterioration of Turkey-Western relations will have a decisive impact on Western-Mediterranean security policy.

The second major obstacle for Western-Mediterranean security relations stems from the ongoing discussion in the US and in most of the European capitals about a National Missile Defense (NMD) or – as it is called today – a Missile Defense (MD). Even if Washington is striving to assure that NMD should protect US-Territory against ballistic missile attacks from rogues, the unintended effects of such a policy - regardless of the fact if at the end Europeans are slipping under the umbrella of an NMD or MD – will be a new round of arms race worldwide. And even pro-western Arab countries will be forced to intensify their programs in acquiring WMD because, if the US or the Alliance becomes more invulnerable from attacks with ballistic missiles countries in the South have to spend more efforts into their own defense to prevent their rogue neighbors from blackmailing or attacking them. The discussion about NMD or MD or AMD (allied Missile Defense) will spark the fear that the southern Mediterranean is considered as a future threat enclave for the security of the Alliance.

Both developments have the potential to deepen the still existing perception that the West is considering the South as a hostile block and that NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue main objective is to reach a specific agreement with some Arab countries to secure the access of possible future CJTF-Operations to the military infrastructure of these countries and to monitor the flow of missile technology to southern Mediterranean states which could threaten northern Mediterranean countries and to monitor the possession of some of the southern Mediterranean countries of WMD.

Taken all those issues together it is obvious that Western-Mediterranean security relations need to be adjusted to these future developments. The question is: How best to do so?

#### **4. Policy Recommendations for the future of Western-Mediterranean security relations**

As my description of future issues and challenges of Western-Mediterranean security relations suggests, the transatlantic security developments will acquire greater importance in the future. This raises the question how the Western-Mediterranean security relations can adapt to these developments. To my view, six steps are necessary:

- Including southern Mediterranean countries in the debate about the future of the transatlantic security relations. To avoid misperception and misunderstandings about the intention of the West towards the southern Mediterranean countries it would be helpful to include Mediterranean countries in discussion on a Post-Summit level. Like the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council of NATO, the Heads of States of the EU and NATO should meet following their summits with the Heads of States of the southern Mediterranean countries to inform them about their decisions and the intentions behind those decisions. Such high-level meetings should be accompanied by second-track meetings where nongovernmental actors are brought together and involved in permanent dialogue on security and defense issues.
- Clear division of labour between western institutions and coordination of activities. Constructive relationships between NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership should be established. The EU should concentrate their efforts to social, economic and cultural questions where it has a clear comparative advantage compared to NATO while the latter should deal with security and defense issues.
- Engaging southern Mediterranean countries closer by establishing practical cooperation. NATO as well as individual member states should offer closer military cooperation, training and joint exercises. Practical cooperation could be fostered by introducing CSBM or joint actions to prevent maritime disasters, mine clearing or to conduct joint search and rescue missions. The exchange of observers at military exercise will contribute to more transparency about NATO's military activities.

Even if some NATO members are reluctant to create a PfP for the Mediterranean NATO should introduce more PfP-elements into the Mediterranean Dialogue. This would contribute to dispel the impression that the aim of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue is to monitor the South. A is to open NATO's Academic Fellowship for researchers from the Mediterranean Dialogue countries

- Creating a Conflict Prevention Network for the Mediterranean. Joint research on conflicts and security developments in the Mediterranean, joint seminars between military staffs from both sides of the Mediterranean is a way to contribute to a common strategic language. Similar to the Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Study in Malta a Mediterranean Academy for Security and Defense Studies should be founded. The main aim of such an academy should be to bring together professionals from the Armed Forces as well as members of the security communities to discuss and work on common projects.
- Making Western-Mediterranean Security relations more flexible and focused. Flexibility could be the key to improve Western-Mediterranean security relations. The acceptance of the fact that the Mediterranean as a homogenous security region does not exist and never existed and that the public as well as the governmental acceptance of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue differs from country to country NATO (and this applies also for the EU) should deepen the security relations with those countries who are ready for closer security cooperation. Contemporarily security relations between the West and the southern Mediterranean countries should focus more on issues of common concern, like terrorism, illegal migration, drug traffic etc.
- Building trans-Mediterranean security structures. The long term vision of those recommendations is that they contribute to build trans-Mediterranean security structures in that sense that both sides of the Mediterranean perceive the security challenges from that region as security challenges for all of them. The precondition for such a view is that the north does not perceive the security in the Mediterranean as marginal for European and transatlantic security and the Mediterranean as a whole as a European backyard.

The Italian saying "tra dire e fare ce di mezzo il mare" applies fully to that long-term vision. But it is worth to start crossing the (Mediterranean) Sea.

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