



MEDITERRANEAN PAPER SERIES **2010**

# MARITIME SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

EUROPEAN AND TRANSATLANTIC APPROACHES

Basil Germond and Eric Grove

**G|M|F**

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Cover photo: A German navy vessel takes on anti-terrorism duties in the Strait of Gibraltar. Photo credit: Danny Gohlke/ AFP/Getty Images.

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Basil Germond and Eric Grove<sup>1</sup>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mediterranean Sea lies at the center of a security nexus whose geopolitical importance has increased since the end of the Cold War. In this turbulent space, European, transatlantic, and North-South dynamics complement each other, while maritime security has always been a critical issue. This paper discusses maritime security in the Mediterranean, beginning, as current dynamics mainly result from long-term historical developments, by examining the evolving security situation in the Mediterranean and the interplay of littoral and outside actors that culminated in U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the Cold War. The paper demonstrates how the end of the Cold War has increased the relative geostrategic importance of the Mediterranean, with new maritime security issues such as terrorism from the sea, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration becoming more important. This paper analyzes maritime security and naval cooperation in the Mediterranean in this current context, examining the relevance and capabilities of both NATO and the EU. It concludes by discussing, from both a European and a transatlantic perspective, the multi-directional and multi-dimensional challenges facing maritime security cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Two main policy-related implications are drawn in the conclusions:

- Southern partners should be more involved in maritime security through confidence-building measures and defense diplomacy activities. Information sharing on transnational threats is also very important, but the exchange of information must be reciprocal and help southern partners as well; participa-

tion in Western-led operations, such as Active Endeavour, or the EU-coordinated anti-illegal immigration operations must increase.

- The threats of piracy, immigration, and terrorism must be better defined, differentiated, and understood. Forums such as the EU's Union for the Mediterranean and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue remain effective platforms in fostering maritime security cooperation, although they should be complemented by national/bilateral initiatives. Finally, emphasizing a comprehensive approach rather than a sector-based one could have positive results, although some states will only agree to cooperate on some aspects and not on others (terrorism rather than illegal immigration, for example).

# 1 FROM THE PHOENICIANS TO THE 21ST CENTURY: BALANCE OF POWER AND MARITIME SECURITY

The Mediterranean has one of the longest histories of maritime security issues in the world. Over the centuries, the galleys of the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Genoese, Venetians, and Spaniards all contended to achieve maritime security or, in the case of the Barbary states, insecurity. Cultures have historically clashed in Mediterranean waters. The last major formal battle of the galley era was fought by Christian and Muslim fleets on the waters at Lepanto in 1571. Later, the sailing navies of France, Spain, and Britain contended for dominance, the latter becoming the first non-littoral power to rise to dominance in the region. The “Pax Britannica” maintained regional stability in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. France was largely contained by the British, although French national expansion across the Mediterranean had the multilateral benefit of finally solving the Corsair problem. From the 1880s, great power naval competition challenged British supremacy and a multipolar balance emerged comprised of Britain, France, Italy, and Austria–Hungary. When the first three ganged up against the fourth, security in the Mediterranean was largely maintained, although Austrian and German submarines based in Austrian ports were a serious threat at times. The Allies were nevertheless able to sustain operations along the Northern Mediterranean and Levantine littorals, contributing significantly to the defeat of the Central Powers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Hattendorf, *Naval Strategy and Policy in the Mediterranean*, Routledge, London, 2000; S.W.C. Pack, *Sea*

The three victors split in the interwar period and Italian ambitions led eventually to war with France and Britain in 1940. Soon, France was temporarily neutralized as a major actor, but Anglo-Italian conflict soon brought in Germany as the Axis and British tried to cut each other’s maritime supply lines and exert power on both sides of the Mediterranean. The conflict swung to and fro but eventually the Axis forces were ejected from North Africa and the Allies were able to mount a maritime invasion of Italy that decisively weakened the German effort in the East in 1943.<sup>2</sup> This was an excellent example of the perhaps surprisingly wide strategic impact of events in the Mediterranean.

Even before the war ended, the British had started efforts to contain communism in Greece and the Balkans, which became an early focus of Cold War rivalry. The United States, whose infant Navy had cut its teeth on the Barbary pirates at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, now emerged as a major maritime player. Soviet pressure on Turkey in 1946 was countered by sending the USS Battleship Missouri to Istanbul carrying the remains of the Turkish ambassador to the United States. The diplomatic signal was clear, as it was when the battleship moved on to Athens. A few

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*Power in the Mediterranean*, Batsford, London, 1971; C.G. Starr, *The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of the invasion of Sicily in causing the Kursk offensive to be called off has been cogently made by Dr Karl-Heinz Frieser, formerly of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Potsdam, e.g., in a paper at a seminar at the Royal United Services Institute, London, 2003.

months later, one of the United States' newest and most powerful aircraft carriers, the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt, again pointedly visited Athens during a three month deployment to the Mediterranean to show support for the anticommunist government. The following year, Britain had to concede to U.S. primacy in fighting the spreads of Soviet influence in the Balkans, an event marked in March 1947 by the declaration in Washington of the "Truman Doctrine." The following month the USS Leyte began a more or less permanent U.S. carrier presence.<sup>3</sup>

The United States established Naval Forces Mediterranean command first in a destroyer tender in Naples under the overall command of the C-in-C Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (CINCNELM) based in London. In 1948, as the Cold War began in earnest, the Mediterranean squadron became the Sixth Task Fleet commanded by Admiral Forest Sherman, soon to be appointed Chief of Naval Operations, a clear mark of the position the force now held in U.S. Naval priorities. In 1950 it became a fully fledged Sixth Fleet and acquired its first nuclear strike aircraft, Lockheed Neptunes kept ashore in Morocco for use by the carrier USS Coral Sea. The importance of the Mediterranean to the Americans was demonstrated when CINCNELM, Admiral Robert B. Carney, moved to Naples in 1951 in the NATO role of Commander in Chief Allied Forces South, subordinate to Supreme Allied Commander Europe; SACEUR. Carney

was also appointed Commander Naval Forces South. The CINCNELM post soon returned to London as NATO began to concentrate on security in the Atlantic itself but Carney remained in Naples to construct his Allied commands. At the end of the year French and Italian sub-areas were created under COMNAVSOUTH.<sup>4</sup>

With Greece and Turkey joining NATO in 1952 wrangling began over the future of the NATO Mediterranean naval command. The British, with a Mediterranean Fleet based in Malta, expected to become the Allied commander of maritime forces in the entire sea. This was difficult as the nuclear armed carriers of the U.S. Sixth Fleet were AFSOUTH's major striking force. A compromise was eventually arrived at where the British Mediterranean Fleet commander would become Commander in Chief of Allied Forces Mediterranean reporting directly to Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The Sixth Fleet would remain subordinate to CINCSOUTH and its commander becoming commander of "Striking Force South" (STRIKFORSOUTH). Lord Mountbatten was the first CINCAFMED; his diplomatic skills were put to good use working out subordinate areas, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See entries on carriers in James L. Mooney (ed.), *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval History Division.

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<sup>4</sup> Details of the development of NATO's Southern maritime command can be found at [http://www.afsouth.nato.int/organisation/CC\\_MAR\\_Naples/Factsheets/Factsheet\\_History](http://www.afsouth.nato.int/organisation/CC_MAR_Naples/Factsheets/Factsheet_History).

<sup>5</sup> For more on this controversy, see E. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident; British Naval Policy Since 1945*, U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1987.

In the words of a recent NATO document, “The Mediterranean thus became a structured part of the defensive structure of the NATO alliance, with responsibility being shared among the nations having a common interest in the area: France, Greece, Turkey, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States.”<sup>6</sup> A limited number of war-built American escorts were provided to the Italian, Greek, and Turkish navies by the United States, and the Italians began new construction of destroyers and frigates. Italy still had a couple of battleships and four cruisers. The country transferred two cruisers to France and one to Greece as war reparations.<sup>7</sup>

In 1956 the Alliance was nearly ruptured with the Anglo-French maritime attack on Egypt. The Sixth Fleet, now increased to two carriers, was used to “lean” on the invaders to demonstrate American displeasure. The landings went ahead and were successful but ruthless American political and financial pressure on the British caused a rapid withdrawal. The prestige of the two remaining Western European actors in the Mediterranean received a decisive jolt. It was perhaps ironic that only two years later the Sixth Fleet was itself landing forces in Lebanon to safeguard the country from increasing Arab nationalist pressure.

The 1960s witnessed a growing super power confrontation in the Mediterranean as U.S. ballistic missile submarines in Task Force 64 were

based in Spain and patrolled the sea to bring targets in the East within range of their Polaris and later Poseidon missiles. They replaced the carriers in a strategic (but not theatre) nuclear strike role. Following negotiations with the post-Franco government, the submarines were withdrawn in 1979; the increased range of the Trident missiles that began deployment that year made Mediterranean deployment less important.<sup>8</sup> In part to counter this threat, the Soviets deployed their more capable Navy and demonstrated support to Syria and Egypt, who in return provided support facilities for ships, submarines, and land-based maritime aircrafts.

The decade also saw a weakening of the Western position as France left the integrated military structure in 1964, withdrawing its ships from AFMED command. The run down of Mediterranean based British ships to service Atlantic and East of Suez commitments caused the British Mediterranean Fleet to be a fleet only in name by 1966. In 1967 both the British Mediterranean Fleet and NATO AFMED commands were abolished and a NAVSOUTH command was restored under CINCSOUTH.<sup>9</sup> The first COMNAVSOUTH, still based in Malta was an Italian admiral, a reflection of that country’s growing maritime capabilities with two

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<sup>6</sup> See note 4.

<sup>7</sup> For details of fleets in this period see *Conway’s All the World’s Fighting Ships 1947-1995*, Conway’s London, 1995.

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<sup>8</sup> The Suez landings are covered comprehensively in G. Carter, *Crises Do Happen; The Royal navy in Operation Musketeer*, Maritime Books, Liskeard, 2006. The extent of the maritime power projected by Britain and France was impressive. The force included five aircraft carriers, two carriers in the LPH role and an LSD.

<sup>9</sup> E. Grove, *op.cit.*, gives more background on this.



new helicopter-carrying guided missile cruisers in service, another under construction, and two new guided missile destroyers, and eight frigates commissioned over the previous ten years. Five American-built submarines had been acquired and four new small submarines were under construction. With Malta's decision to assert neutrality COMNAVSOUTH headquarters was transferred to Naples in 1971.

In 1968, NATO ministers expressed concern at the growth of Soviet maritime power in the Mediterranean. The following year, the Defence Planning Committee called for the creation of a multinational "On Call" Force of escorts, NAVOCFORMED, which was formed in 1970 with American, British, Italian, Turkish, and Greek units. It was subsequently brought together, usually twice a year, for exercises, including the "Deterrent Force" series with other assets and port visits, with the aim of displaying alliance solidarity and giving experience of combined operations. Its commander was usually from one of the Southern European navies working through NAVSOUTH to CINCSOUTH and SACEUR. Unlike its North Atlantic equivalent, STANAVFORLANT, it was not a standing force. Over time other nations participated, including West Germany and Spain when it joined the Alliance. It was an important step toward multinational naval capabilities in the region that would be further developed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> F. Veltri, "NAVOCFORMED, Peace Through Solidarity and Deterrence," 1992, in [http://www.avsouth.nato.int/organization/CC\\_MAR\\_Naples?NAVSOUTH/navoc.htm](http://www.avsouth.nato.int/organization/CC_MAR_Naples?NAVSOUTH/navoc.htm).

Soviet deployments steadily increased, and in 1973 the Mediterranean Eskadra effectively marked and neutralized the Sixth Fleet as the two sides in the Cold War backed their respective clients.<sup>11</sup> Britain used the withdrawal from East of Suez to make a minor come-back in the Mediterranean as part of its contribution to NATO's Flexible Response strategy that had emphasized crisis management capabilities on the flanks, but it withdrew again after the 1975 Defence Review. The newly proactive 1981 NATO Concept of Maritime Operations (CONMAROPS) — with its three principles of containment, defense in-depth, and keeping the initiative, coupled with the USN's new forward Maritime Strategy formulated the following year — meant new thinking was given to prevailing in the two relevant CONMAROPS campaigns, "Mediterranean Lifelines" in the western basin and "Eastern Mediterranean" in the eastern. The aim was to maintain maritime lines of communication from the west to forces that would be acting offensively farther east against both the Black Sea Fleet as well any opposing forces remaining in the Mediterranean itself. NATO carriers and amphibious ships would also support defense against Warsaw Pact attacks on Greece or Turkey, both countries which by now deployed substantial fleets to give support. It must be admitted, however, that apart from local contingencies, such as the Lebanon multinational intervention in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion in 1982 — an affair that saw a reactivated

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<sup>11</sup> L. J. Goldstein and Y. M. Zhukov, "Tale of Two Fleets: A Russian Perspective on the 1973 Naval Standoff in the Mediterranean," *Naval War College Review*, spring 2004.

American battleship engaging in shore bombardment — attention had largely shifted to the Atlantic and Norwegian Sea. Although forward maritime operations were applicable to Mediterranean scenarios, the theatres most considered were the Norwegian Sea and Western Pacific. This was only marginally balanced by the appointment at the beginning of 1983 of CINCOSOUTH to the post of C-in-C U.S. Naval Forces in Europe (CINCUSNAVEUR).<sup>12</sup>

During the Cold War, the Mediterranean had variously risen and fallen in importance as a geo-strategic space among others within the broader Euroatlantic defense system. American power was always a given after 1945; British power declined as Soviet power grew. Clearly for the littoral actors, the Mediterranean retained a fundamental strategic importance. Moreover, the region remained a frontier zone between the North and the South and, thus, as described above, was the theatre of some conflicts possessing their own dynamics, notably the Arab-Israeli disputes. However, East-West rivalry had always complemented and, in a sense, exceeded the North-South antagonism, such as during the war of October 1973. Thus, the fact that the Mediterranean was a point of contact between the North and the South was not the main determinant of policies and strategies toward the Mediterranean during the Cold War.

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<sup>12</sup> For NATO's maritime strategy and preoccupations at the end of the Cold War see E. Grove, *Maritime Strategy and European Security*, Brassey's, London, 1990, and *Battle for the Fjords: NATO's Forward Maritime Strategy in Action*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1991.

This was demonstrated just as the Cold War was ending in the crisis caused by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. This led to the first and only mobilization of NAVOCFORMED to carry out surveillance and maintain freedom of navigation in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of Operation Southern Guard, NATO's first ever operation (which also included Channel Command's multinational mine countermeasures force STANAVFORCHAN formed in 1974). Eight escorts, including a Portuguese frigate, and two auxiliaries were kept continuously on task until March 1991. It had already been suggested that the force become a standing one, and this was duly approved at the end of 1991, STANAVFORMED being formed at the end of April 1992.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Rise of Regional Risks and Responses**

The dissolution of Yugoslavia persuaded the Western European Union Ministerial Council, under the dynamic leadership of Wim van Eekelen, to establish a naval monitoring force Operation Sharp Vigilance in the Adriatic in July 1992. The Petersberg Declaration of the WEU Council of Ministers had just suggested that WEU member states, under WEU authority, could employ forces for humanitarian and rescue tasks, and peacekeeping. Making a maritime contribution to stabilizing the Balkans seemed an opportunity to start such an operation straightaway. It is perhaps significant that a Mediterranean scenario provided the context for

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<sup>13</sup> See note 11.

such a pioneering European development. Not to be outdone, NATO began Operation Maritime Monitor, with STANAVFORMED ordered to act in close cooperation and coordination with the WEU ships. The WEU force patrolled the Straits of Otranto and the NATO force patrolled off Montenegro. STANAVFORLANT was brought into the Mediterranean to allow roulement of the forces. When the November 1992 Security Council Resolution 787 upgraded the surveillance operations to inspection and interdiction, the WEU operation became Sharp Fence and the NATO operation became Maritime Guard. In April 1993 the Security Council tightened the embargo still further and the following month the two operations were folded together as Sharp Guard. The three forces combined in a single Combined Task Force 440 with three Task Groups. Two groups maintained the patrol stations while the third rested and was replenished.<sup>14</sup> This operation was an interesting example of Atlantic and European organizations working together, although there was criticism that the WEU had perhaps acted too rashly. Nevertheless Sharp Guard does demonstrate how international naval action can use cooperation, not just among states but also among international organizations, to provide a flexible framework for cooperation in the Mediterranean region. Sharp Guard came to an end in 1996.

Meanwhile, in 1995, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain had come together to create a combined

“European” contingency force, EUROMARFOR, to carry out Petersberg tasks in whatever political framework seemed appropriate. The Mediterranean relevance of such a force was clear from its membership, although not officially stated. Command was to rotate on a two-year basis among the four states; the first Commander was a Spanish admiral. These four nations deployed not inconsiderable forces by this time, including a total of 6 aircraft carriers/helicopter cruisers, 8 major amphibious ships, and 88 destroyers and frigates. The European defense and security structures within which EUROMARFOR primarily worked evolved rapidly. At the 1996 NATO ministerial in Berlin, the stress was still on the creation of a European Security and Defence “Identity” using the WEU. But as it moved through the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and the Cologne Council in 1999 to the Treaty of Nice in 2001, the EU confirmed its own institutional primacy in security matters (institutionalization in 1999 of the European Security and Defence Policy, ESDP). In 2002 the EU and NATO formalized their division of labor in the Berlin Plus agreement that confirmed modalities for EU-NATO cooperation and procedures for release of NATO assets to EU-led operations.

NATO maritime forces and structures in the Mediterranean region also evolved. In 1999 NATO created a second combined standing Mine Countermeasures Force especially for Mediterranean operations, MCM Force Mediterranean (MCMFM). Like STANAVFORMED it was subordinated to COMNAV SOUTH whose command was simplified, losing its sub areas, as part of the general reorganization of NATO

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<sup>14</sup> E. Grove, “Navies in Peacekeeping and Enforcement: The British Experience in the Adriatic,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 1, No. 4, winter 1994.

commands the same year. In 2004 CINCSOUTH was changed to Joint Forces Command (Naples) and what had become the American COMUSNAVEUR establishment in London was transferred to Naples, which was now confirmed as the hub of the American naval presence in Europe.

This reorganization reflected the transition taking place in the Alliance as the end of the Cold War engendered a necessary redefinition of strategic and security policies, given budgetary restrictions and the emergence of what were widely perceived as “new” risks and threats toward Europe in particular and the “West” — or the “North” — in general. The European states, despite differences in the definition and perception of threats, have evolved away from a conception of Europe’s defense based on the territorial defense of the continent and the defense of the Euroatlantic sea lines of communication against, respectively, an invasion by the forces of the Warsaw Pact and a major Soviet maritime offensive. They have embraced a broader concept of security, encompassing terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), transnational criminality, illegal immigration, and environmental change and degradation (including marine pollution and over-fishing). With the broadening of the security agenda, naval forces — given their basic characteristics of flexibility, mobility, versatility, and interoperability — have the widest possible relevance in intervention, crisis management, counter-terrorism, counter-

piracy, counter-trafficking, and marine environmental protection.<sup>15</sup>

The probability of NATO and/or European naval forces being engaged in high-level war fighting missions has, for the time being, declined, although not gone away entirely. The possibility of a resurgent Russia cannot be ruled out as it nurses grievances about imperial losses caused by defeat in the Cold War. Maritime power projection from the Mediterranean might still be required to defend new NATO allies, such as Romania if the “sleeping conflict” in Moldova woke up. Maritime power is, as ever, also useful in more limited circumstances. The Sixth Fleet might now be reduced to a permanent deployment of a single command ship — the USS Mount Whitney — an Aegis destroyer, and a landing ship dock but these can also be used with effect. When the Georgian-Russian conflict broke out in 2008, the USS Mount Whitney and destroyer McFaul delivered aid, and also delivered a clear but quiet signal that action could be taken if the Russians pressed their advantage too far. USS Mount Whitney could have controlled any joint operation required and McFaul’s Aegis system potentially controlled the skies. It was yet another example of the leverage of sea power.

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<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive review of the evolution of the naval missions after the end of the Cold War, see B. Germond, *Les forces navales européennes dans la période post-guerre froide*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2008.

## 2 RETHINKING SEA POWER IN A 21ST CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN SETTING

Geo-strategically, the importance of the Atlantic Ocean has tended to decrease, since a threat to Euroatlantic Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) could only come with a crisis with Russia and then on a much reduced scale compared to that of the 1970s-80s. In contrast, the Mediterranean, whose importance has less to do with SLOCs and more with the crises and instabilities surrounding it, has gained importance in terms of security.<sup>16</sup> In the post-Cold War era, the Mediterranean is at the center of a security nexus, where the two shores, though interdependent, have developed a certain antagonism and feeling of distrust toward each other. The “northern” states fear the instability that the “South” represents (terrorism, immigration, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, etc.), while the “southern” states fear the growing culture of projection and intervention developed by the United States and Europe,<sup>17</sup> especially when they are related to what are regarded as neo-colonial economic policies developed by the “North.”<sup>18</sup>

Both NATO and the EU are concerned about maritime security in the Mediterranean, and the two organizations have explicitly stated the importance of this area in terms of security.<sup>19</sup> If both actors have developed cooperative tools, such as the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and the EU Barcelona Process and the subsequent Union for the Mediterranean, their de facto objectives are related to energy security, counter-immigration, counter-terrorism, and counter-trafficking. For instance, in the maritime field, the 5+5 Dialogue (bringing together Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and Tunisia) implemented to discuss the management of migratory flows in the Mediterranean may be seen as an example of successful informal North-South political dialogue. However, it could also be viewed as another instrument of leadership initiated by some European states to tackle the issue of illegal immigration.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Eskadra in May 1991 (and despite the appearance since of some

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<sup>16</sup> B. Germond, “Multinational Military Cooperation and its Challenges: The Case of European Naval Operations in the Wider Mediterranean Area,” *International Relations*, Vol. 22, No. 2, June 2008, pp. 173-191.

<sup>17</sup> G. Arcudi, “Forces de police et forces armées, sécurité et défense: où sont les frontières ?”, in G. Arcudi, M. Liehti, M. Vonlanthen, *Frontières entre police et armée*, Cahier du GIPRI, No. 2, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> For a similar type of analysis, see M. Kinacioglu, “From East-West Rivalry to North-South Division: Redefining the Mediterranean Security Agenda,” *International Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2000, pp. 27-39.

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<sup>19</sup> NATO, “The Alliance's Strategic Concept agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council (Roma, 8 November 1991),” in *NATO Basic Texts*, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/b911108a.htm> (10 February 2007); NATO, “The Alliance's Strategic Concept approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council (Washington DC, 23-24 April 1999),” in *Press Release*, NAC-S(99)65, 24 April 1999, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> (February 2007); EU, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 2003.

Russian warships up to and including their remaining aircraft carrier) the Europeans and the United States control the Mediterranean and can freely deal with two broad categories of issues: regional and internal conflicts (such as in the Balkans, the Gulf, the Middle East, North Africa, etc.), which call for maritime interventions, and the transnational threats, which call for efforts in terms of maritime security. Both issues are obviously linked, as the second (criminal actors, terrorists) feed from the first (conflicts, weak states).

The very nature of the maritime milieu facilitates the proliferation of transnational threats. Indeed, the sea is uninhabitable and one cannot occupy it in a classical military manner.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is relatively difficult for states to control the sea. In other words, it remains Mahan's "great common."<sup>21</sup> Consequently, it also "represents a space of liberty for criminal non-state actors, which can operate in a vast space without facing many police constraints."<sup>22</sup> Combating transna-

tional threats at sea or coming from the sea, requires day-to-day "constabulary" activities.<sup>23</sup> By definition this is mainly a peacetime notion, as it does not constitute a reaction to an aggression by another state and does not normally imply full-scale military operations. It is the transposition at sea of Max Weber's notion of the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.<sup>24</sup>

Maritime security works at two levels, the normative and the operational; the establishment of rules and then the setting up and enforcement of controls. It also requires an efficient intelligence network, as the sea is wide and hard to monitor. Indeed, hundreds of ships greater than 100 tons transit through the Mediterranean daily and only a few of them may transport illegal cargo/passengers. At the operational level, navies and other forces enforce law in the territorial waters, the EEZs, and in international waters. Different countries have different structures for their maritime security forces. The United States has always kept a long-standing distinction between the enforcement rights of its Coast Guard and Navy, although America's latest Maritime Strategy covers both forces, as well as stressing international cooperation.<sup>25</sup> Italy created a Coast Guard (Guardia Costiera) out of the Navy in 1989 to operate under the control of the

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<sup>20</sup> Sir J. Corbett uses the term "command of the sea" to describe the level of domination a naval actor can exercise on all or part of the sea. J. S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, United States Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1988 (original edition: Longmans, London, 1911). The U.S. admiral Stansfield Turner prefers using the geographically restricted notion of "control of the sea." S. Turner, "Missions of the U.S. Navy," *Naval War College Review*, March-April, 1974.

<sup>21</sup> A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, Little Brown, Boston, 1890, generally regarded as the beginning of modern sea power studies.

<sup>22</sup> B. Germond, "The Naval and Maritime Dimension of the European Union," in G. Bossuat and A. Deighton (eds.), *The EC/EU: a world security actor?*, Soleb, Paris, 2007, p. 352.

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<sup>23</sup> *A Cooperative Strategy for Twenty First Century Sea Power*, <http://www.navy.mil/maritime/MaritimeStrategy.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> M. Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, Reclam, Ditzingen, 1992, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> For details of all these forces and their organisations see E. Wertheim, *Combat Fleets of the World*, Naval Institute Press, Annapoli, 2007.



Ministry of Transport and Navigation in policing, fisheries protection, oil spill dispersal, and search and rescue (SAR) duties. There is also a large Guardia di Finanza (Customs Service flotilla) and the Carabinieri have a large number of boats for use within the 12 mile limit. Spain relies on its Navy for many of these duties. The Armada Espanola has a substantial flotilla of patrol vessels, large and small; the Guardia Civil is, however, increasing its maritime capabilities as part of its port security and counter-terrorist role. At the other end of the Mediterranean, both Greece and Turkey complement their not inconsiderable navies with Coast Guards. In France, the Navy, the Custom Service, the Maritime Affairs, the Fisheries Protection, the Police, and the Gendarmerie all work together in the framework of the Action de l'Etat en Mer (AEM, i.e., the state action at sea). This body coordinates the actions of the different actors that look after security out to 200 miles relatively efficiently, but French naval officers like to keep a clear distinction between themselves and policemen. However, the large number of French Frégates de Surveillance and Frégates Légères are more offshore patrol vessels than serious warships. Britain stolidly insists that its Royal Navy has a "constabulary" role alongside its "military" and "benign" tasks.

In terms of security, Europe and the Mediterranean are more strongly linked today than during the Cold War era, because most of the "new" security challenges identified by the Europeans are now localized in this area.<sup>26</sup> The Mediterra-

nean constitutes the main route toward Europe for incoming transnational threats, such as illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and terrorism. Moreover, the adjacent Horn of Africa suffers a huge increase of piracy and robbery at sea. Consequently, European states, NATO, and the EU are strongly involved within the "wider" Mediterranean area.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the Mediterranean is linked to adjacent maritime theatres, mainly the Atlantic, the Black Sea, and the Indian Ocean, which have their own personal dynamics. However, security issues at sea are strongly interrelated. Therefore, problems in one theatre (e.g., piracy at the Horn of Africa or illegal immigration off the Canaries Islands) affect security and security policies in the Mediterranean. The

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atlantique depuis 1989," *Les Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, No. 71, T. 2, décembre 2005, pp. 227-244.

<sup>27</sup> The conception of a wider Mediterranean, initially developed by the Italian military to justify their "out of area" operations, has rapidly gained credit, since "the security challenges of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean stretch well beyond their geographic boundaries; their geopolitical dimensions encompass the Atlantic approaches to Gibraltar, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus, and even Central Asia. From a western point of view, it results in a 'Wider Mediterranean' arena" (Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola, "Security Challenges of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean," Paper presentation, 21st International Workshop on Global Security - *Global Security: A Broader Concept for the 21st Century*, Berlin, 7-10 May 2004). This enlarged Mediterranean basin goes from Gibraltar, or even the coasts of Senegal (on the Atlantic front), to the Horn of Africa and the western part of the Indian Ocean (Rear-Admiral Salvatore Ruzittu, "The new roles of European navies: the maritime and air surveillance," Assembly of the WEU, Lisbon, September 18, 2007, p. 2.).

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<sup>26</sup> B. Germond, "De l'Atlantique à la Méditerranée: vers une réorientation de la géostratégie navale dans l'espace euro-

concept of “wider” Mediterranean allows assimilating this cross-space geo-political dynamics.

### September 11th and After

Following 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, NATO decided on a number of responses on a multinational basis.<sup>28</sup> These were the first ever operations carried out under Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty. Operation Active Endeavour began on October 4 using STANAVFORMED, which was undergoing exercises off the southern coast of Spain and was sent to the Eastern Mediterranean to begin monitoring shipping in that basin. On February 4 the operation was extended to escorting ships through the Straits of Gibraltar (this was done until May 2004). In March 2003 the mandate was extended again to allow compliant onboard inspections (i.e., the consent of the flag state and of the captain are needed) and, after March 2004, to the entire Mediterranean Sea. EUROMARFOR contributed to the operation in 2002, and some non EU/NATO nations have taken part, including Russia. This has ensured not only deterrence, but direct involvement to maintain and exert command of the sea.<sup>29</sup> Active

Endeavour is an ideal-type of complex naval cooperation within a multilateral composite network gathering national units, on-call, and standing naval forces.

The concrete results of such an operation are very difficult to estimate. Officials announce that the deterrent effect is clear, basing their statements on the fact that there were very few cases of terrorism either from the sea or at sea, and attributing to themselves the merit of this positive situation, saying that the Coalition’s controls are successful in deterring terrorists. One has to remain cautious regarding these potential deterrent effects since the correlation is very difficult to prove. Nevertheless, one can notice some positive side effects in terms of reducing transnational criminality, notably smuggling activities.<sup>30</sup>

As well as the threat of terrorism from or (much less likely) at sea there are three more ways in which the Mediterranean might be used to threaten European security.<sup>31</sup> The first is possible acts of piracy.<sup>32</sup> In fact, European waters are not

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<sup>28</sup> This issue has been discussed in B. Germond, “Multinational Military Cooperation and its Challenges,” *op.cit.*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>29</sup> NATO Diplomatic Division, *Combating terrorism at sea*, Briefing, April 2004. Between October 2001 and January 2005, 59,000 ships were identified, of which 80 were subject to control on board, and 488 allied ships were escorted in the Gibraltar Strait (NATO Diplomatic Division, *NATO and the fight against terrorism*, Briefing, March 2005, p. 6.).

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<sup>30</sup> NATO Diplomatic Division, *Combating terrorism at sea*, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> See notably Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 2003, pp. 4-5; Commission of the European Communities, *Green Paper: Towards a Future Maritime Policy for the Union*, *op.cit.*, Background Paper No. 6 on Maritime Safety and Security, pp. 29-31.

<sup>32</sup> Legally speaking, “piracy” describes actions performed in international waters; actions performed within territorial waters are called “robbery at sea.”



currently a theatre of such activities, as the coastal areas are sufficiently well policed. This prevents potential pirates from using rear bases, which are essential to prepare and execute attacks at sea.<sup>33</sup> Close to Europe, however, the Somali coasts are currently challenging in terms of piracy. This has led to both NATO and European activities, with the latter creating a notable precedent. Indeed, on November 5, 2008, the Council of the EU launched the first ever EU (rather than WEU) naval operation: Operation Atalanta.<sup>34</sup> It has the mandate to deter, prevent, and respond to acts of piracy and robbery at sea, including within Somali territorial waters.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, many criminal activities at sea concern trafficking of arms and drugs. Arms trafficking includes small arms, light weapons, components of WMD, and even entire ballistic missile

systems; it is thus linked to “rogue states,” warlordism, civil war, insurgencies, and terrorism. Drug trafficking includes cannabis from North Africa, cocaine from South America, and heroin from Asia, essentially from Afghanistan. The risky zones for Europe are the least policed areas such as the Balkan coasts in the Adriatic Sea or the Black Sea. For geographical reasons, as Morocco is the world’s main cannabis provider, the Strait of Gibraltar is also a hot spot.<sup>36</sup> In addition, since controls in the Caribbean are more rigorous, the cocaine route tends to go through Africa before redirecting towards France and Spain, thus merging with the cannabis route.<sup>37</sup> This situation also suggests still closer links between Atlantic and Mediterranean security.

Within the Mediterranean, national navies, Coast Guards, and multinational naval forces are monitoring the sea on a daily basis, and, depending on the information transmitted by the various national and multilateral intelligence mechanisms, they can intercept smugglers. These actions are restricted by the fact that according to the international law of the sea one is not authorized, on the high seas, to intercept ships flying foreign flags without flag states’ consent. The Europeans thus rely upon multilateral accords, bilateral agreements, or ad hoc

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<sup>33</sup> In fact, the risky zones in terms of piracy and robbery at sea listed by the International Maritime Bureau are located in the waters near China, Indonesia (especially the Strait of Malacca), Nigeria, in the vicinity of some Brazilian ports, and off Somalia and at the Horn of Africa. International Chamber of Commerce, Commercial Crime Service, International Maritime Bureau, <http://www.icc-ccs.org>.

<sup>34</sup> On Operation Atalanta, see B. Germond and M.E. Smith, “Interest-Definition and Threat-Perception in the EU: Explaining the First ESDP Anti-Piracy Naval Operation,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 30, No. 3, December 2009, pp. 573-593.

<sup>35</sup> Council of the EU, “Council Joint Action 2008/851/CFSP of 10 November 2008 on a European Union military operation to contribute to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast,” in *Official Journal of the European Union*, November 11, 2008, pp. 33-37.

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<sup>36</sup> T. Boekhout and Van Solinge, “Drug use and drug trafficking in Europe,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, Vol. 89, No. 1, 1998, p. 101.

<sup>37</sup> C. Cornevin, “Les trafiquants de cocaïne investissent les routes du haschisch,” *Le Figaro*, 13 septembre 2005, p. 8; AFP, *Opération antidrogue en Méditerranée*, 29 juin 2006.

compromises with flag states.<sup>38</sup> Multinational forces such as EUROMARFOR or the NATO Standing Naval forces (named since 2005, as a reflection of their more general relevance, Standing NATO Maritime Groups 1 and 2 and Standing NATO MCM Groups 1 and 2) and multilateral operations (such as Active Endeavour) also play a role in narcotics interdiction.

Thirdly, even though it is a debatable issue, illegal immigration is considered by the European states and by the EU as a threat to their security. Concerning illegal immigration by sea, it must be stressed that in the majority of cases illegal migrants must not be classified as the real criminals, who are the human smugglers. The migrants often die while crossing the Mediterranean and smugglers are even ready to throw them into the sea in order not to suffer a flagrante delicto when they see the police forces arriving.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the daily activities of naval forces and Coast Guards consist not only in deterring the smugglers and arresting the illegal immigrants, but also in helping endangered small boats and migrants as in any other SAR operation. The areas most threatened by illegal immigration, as with drug

smuggling, are the less-policed regions, but wide areas of Mediterranean littoral are also vulnerable.

Italy has confronted massive immigration flows from the Balkans, especially since the fall of communism in Tirana in 1991. In 1997, following the new influx of migrants that followed the Albanian financial crisis, Italy decided to strengthen its maritime defenses by signing an agreement with Albania authorizing Italian enforcement forces to operate in Albanian territorial waters in order to intercept and roll back migrants. Thus, since 2004, the route from Albania to Italy through the Strait of Otranto has been less frequented, thanks to the intense monitoring activities carried out by the Italian Navy, Guardia di Finanza, and Guardia Costiera<sup>40</sup> and the aid given upstream by Italy to the Albanians.<sup>41</sup> Since the middle of the 1990s, Italy has also faced a serious clandestine immigration flow from North Africa (notably from Libya), via Sicily and particularly the island of Lampedusa, where migrants are landing almost on a daily basis. Moreover, due to the efforts in the Adriatic, a great proportion of the migrants has been redirected towards the Sicily route.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See W.C. Gilmore, "Narcotics interdiction at sea: The 1995 Council of Europe Agreement," *Marine Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1996, pp. 3-14; M. Byers, "Policing the High Seas: The Proliferation Security Initiative," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 98, No. 3, July 2004, pp. 526-545.

<sup>39</sup> On the issue of boat people, see M. Pugh, *Europe's Boat People: Maritime Cooperation in the Mediterranean*, Chaillot Paper No. 41, WEU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, July 2000.

<sup>40</sup> In 2002, a quarter of Italian navy's sailing hours were devoted to the struggle against illegal immigration. D. Lutterbeck, "Policing Migration in the Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2006, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> BBC Monitoring International Report, *Albanian minister hails cooperation with Italy in stemming crime, migrants*, July 5, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> D. Lutterbeck, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

In Spain, the phenomenon of illegal immigration from North Africa (via Ceuta and Melilla) has become very important since 1995. In this case, the role of naval forces is relatively limited, as the majority of the interceptions is done ashore. The role of maritime forces is often limited to SAR, as migrants' skiffs often capsize.<sup>43</sup> Since 2004, the number of migrants using the Gibraltar route has decreased due to the intensity of controls carried out ashore, especially in Ceuta and Melilla.<sup>44</sup> As in the case of Italy, however, this reduction coincides with an increase of arrivals via the Canaries route (from Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal). This route seems to have suffered little maritime interdiction so far (with the noticeable exception of EU-coordinated operations).

Recently, the Maltese route has become highly-valued because of the geographical location of the island (half-way between the African coast and Italy), and because of Malta's membership since 2004 of the EU. Greece has also faced a flow of illegal immigration since the end of the 1990s and notably the beginning of the 2000s via Turkey. France is less affected by the phenomenon of boat people. Officials say that it is due to the deterrent effect of controls at sea, but it seems that the geographical factor may be a better explanation.<sup>45</sup>

States engage their navy, coast guards, and police forces to deter, to arrest or to rescue illegal migrants in the Mediterranean. But since 2005, the EU is also involved through its specialized agency FRONTEX, which has coordinated various operations conducted multilaterally by European navies in the Aegean Sea, in the Western Mediterranean, off Malta, as well as off the coasts of Senegal and the Canaries.

### **NATO and EU Maritime Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean**

Maritime security often requires states to act outside their territorial waters and sometimes within the territorial waters of foreign states, in order to cope with the varied challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Interstate coordination and multi-lateral operations at the EU or NATO level are therefore crucial in order to obtain security at sea. Criminal actors can use the maritime space to their advantage, by exploiting legal disparities, as well as inefficient coordination among services within and among the different countries. Consequently, cooperation in the field of the fight against transnational threats at sea is a major requirement, although one that is not so readily achievable.

NATO and the EU are the major multilateral actors involved in fostering maritime cooperation in the Mediterranean. As the traditional naval actor in the Mediterranean, NATO has the necessary experience, assets, and credibility to promote cooperation and coalition building in the area. Moreover, the participation of the United States implies more assets, more power,

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<sup>43</sup> M. Pugh, *op.cit.*, II. 4.

<sup>44</sup> AFP, *Espagne: l'immigration clandestine par la mer en baisse de 18% en 2004*, 7 janvier 2005.

<sup>45</sup> For the official point of view of the French General Staff, see Etat-major des Armées, *Sauvegarde maritime: une dimension de sécurité renouvelée*, Paris, 2004, pp. 9-10.

and more leverage. However, there is also a strong misperception by the “South,” which thinks of NATO as a form of U.S. domination.<sup>46</sup> Despite this, and the involvement of Israel in NATO’s dialogue and cooperation activities, all North African states except Libya have become involved in a way or another. Operationally speaking, however, NATO is less competent in the fields of counter-immigration and marine environmental protection.

Compared to NATO, the EU possesses several advantages: it has a better expertise in “soft security,” which includes counter-immigration and maritime safety, and has a comparative advantage in civilian power projection, i.e., exercising the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence at sea. The EU has developed a comprehensive approach to maritime security. Its Integrated Maritime Policy (October 2007) seeks to harmonize the various European policies concerning maritime affairs in order to promote good governance at sea and to struggle against the transnational criminality at sea.<sup>47</sup> The EU’s approach is flexible,

cross-pillar, and interagency; consequently, the EU has a comparative advantage in fostering maritime cooperation among states. That said, as in the case of NATO, there is a growing misperception of the EU’s policies by the “South.” This is due to the fact that the EU is developing two apparent strategies toward its neighbors and maritime margins: the “Fortress Europe” strategy, which seeks to make the EU impregnable by hermetically sealing its external borders especially against illegal immigration, and the interventionist “Imperial Europe” strategy, which seeks to project security outside the EU’s external boundaries so as to obtain security inside.<sup>48</sup> These are implied strategies rather than officially declared policies but are perceived as real nonetheless. Finally, compared to NATO, the EU has a relative weakness regarding naval power and force projection, although this should not be overrated given sufficient political will.

Both actors have advantages as well as limits. These, however tend to complement each other.<sup>49</sup> Together they can boost maritime security cooperation in the Mediterranean, if they manage to avoid duplication and to develop a common,

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<sup>46</sup> On that matter, see B. Germond, “Multinational Military Cooperation and its Challenges,” *op.cit.*, pp. 184-186.

<sup>47</sup> Commission of the European Communities, *An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union*, Brussels, October 10, 2007, COM(2007) 575 final. The rationale behind the formulation of a European maritime policy is to integrate the sector-based policies and actions horizontally, “based on the clear recognition that all matters relating to Europe’s oceans and seas are interlinked, and that sea-related policies must develop in a joined-up way if we are to reap the desired results.” The overall goals are very ambitious: “An Integrated Maritime Policy will enhance Europe’s capacity to face the challenges of globalisation and competitiveness, climate

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change, degradation of the marine environment, maritime safety and security, and energy security and sustainability.”

<sup>48</sup> B. Germond, “From Frontier to Boundary and Back Again: The European Union’s Maritime Margins,” *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, February 2010, pp. 45-46.

<sup>49</sup> B. Germond, “Venus Has Learned Geopolitics: The European Union’s Frontier and Transatlantic Relations,” in J. Hanhimäki, G. Soutou, and B. Germond (eds.), *Transatlantic Security from the Cold War to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Routledge Handbooks, Routledge, London and New York, June 2010.

comprehensive, and integrated approach  
(including “soft security-hard security”  
integration and civil-military coordination rather  
than a sector- or institution-based approach).

# 3 CONCLUSIONS

## **Mediterranean maritime security: Tous Azimuts' and Multi-Dimensional**

In the Mediterranean, maritime security cooperation implies not only EU or North Atlantic cooperation, but also North-South maritime cooperation, which has not only technical, tactical, and operational dimensions, but also involves confidence building, coalition building, and general dialogue. Southern partners should be more involved in maritime security. Confidence-building measures should be improved and defense diplomacy activities emphasized, such as port calls and combined exercises. Information sharing on transnational threats is also very important, but the exchange of information must be reciprocal and help southern partners as well; participation in Western-led operations, such as Active Endeavour, or the EU-coordinated anti-illegal immigration operations must increase.

Maritime security cooperation must effectively benefit both sides of the Mediterranean and must be perceived as such by the "South." Accordingly, communication must be improved, so as to obtain better perception and image. The threats of piracy, immigration, and terrorism must be better defined, differentiated, and understood. Threats may be originating from the South but the "South" is not a threat per se. Emphasizing the regional, i.e., the Mediterranean, dimension rather than the "threats" from terrorism, immigration, etc., will have positive results. Forums such as the EU's Union for the Mediterranean and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue remain effective platforms in fostering maritime security cooperation, although they should be comple-

mented by national/bilateral initiatives. The United States must participate, so as to show American good will, and de-securitize the transatlantic discourse by emphasizing the need for regional cooperation rather than cooperation in a "War on Terror." This seems to be the policy that the Obama administration is pursuing, all the more since NATO's work on a new strategic concept (with a strong Mediterranean dimension) may well attract the attention of U.S. strategists.<sup>50</sup> Finally, emphasizing a comprehensive approach rather than a sector-based one could have positive results, although some states will only agree to cooperate on some aspects and not on others (for example terrorism rather than illegal immigration).

The Mediterranean has reverted to its traditional position as a major security nexus at the center of the security interests of NATO and the EU, of Europe and the United States, of the "North" and the "South." This importance derives from the localization and concentration on its shores and waters of many security problems now considered as priorities: regional conflicts, intrastate crises and instability, and transnational threats. A comprehensive and multilateral approach to maritime security in the Mediterranean is the key with both NATO and the EU playing critical and complementary roles.

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<sup>50</sup> I. O. Lesser, "From Bush to Obama: A Year of Transition in American Policy toward the Mediterranean and the Near East," in *MED.2009: 2008 in the Euro-Mediterranean Space*, European Institute of the Mediterranean and Cidob Fundació, Barcelona, 2009, p. 34.



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