

Summary: The United States has been an economic, diplomatic, and security actor in the Mediterranean for over 200 years. Mediterranean security is set to pose key tests for both NATO and EU strategy in the years ahead. U.S. political and military engagement will be important elements in regional stability. But the relatively diffuse nature of Mediterranean security risks, a substantially reduced permanent military presence, and some marked differences in the European and U.S. approach to the region will complicate policy looking “south.”

The United States and the Future of Mediterranean Security: Reflections from GMF’s Mediterranean Strategy Group

by Ian O. Lesser

Introduction

The United States has been an economic, diplomatic, and security actor in the Mediterranean for over 200 years. The region was one of the first and most enduring areas of U.S. international engagement. Recent developments on the security scene on Europe’s southern periphery, and in Europe itself, underscore the Mediterranean’s centrality in transatlantic concerns. From a U.S. perspective, the Mediterranean region presents an extraordinary number of varied security problems. Alongside pressing challenges in relations with Russia, Mediterranean security is set to pose key tests for both NATO and EU strategy in the years ahead. Many arrangements being made to bolster deterrence in Europe’s north and east will be relevant — and perhaps more likely to be used — around the Mediterranean. U.S. political and military engagement will be important elements in regional stability. But the

relatively diffuse nature of Mediterranean security risks, a substantially reduced permanent military presence, and some marked differences in the European and U.S. approach to the region will complicate policy looking “south.”

New Dynamics in the Strategic Environment

In recent years, the Mediterranean has been a place of crisis and revolutionary change affecting the Middle East and North Africa, Southern Europe, and transatlantic stakes in these regions. At the same time, the strategic environment in the Mediterranean is increasingly shaped by forces emanating from outside the region: from the Levant and the Eurasian and African hinterlands, from the Black Sea, and from the Atlantic Basin north and south. The net result of these shifts has been the progressive globalization of Mediterranean security.

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Mediterranean places and events are at once more consequential for international security and less purely Mediterranean in character. There are multiple examples of these transregional connections. The circulation of foreign fighters from Europe and elsewhere to the battlegrounds of the Levant, and back, is now a leading security challenge for much of Europe.¹ Terrorist attacks and counterterrorism operations in France, Belgium, and Denmark, in particular, underscore the nature of the threat. The transit of foreign fighters to Syria, generally through Turkey, is also putting pressure on Ankara in the context of Turkey's already troubled relations with transatlantic partners.² The prospect of protracted conflict in Syria and Iraq and the potential for the spread of extremism like that of the so-called Islamic State group (ISIS) to other parts of the Mediterranean — already evident in Libya — is likely to shape the Mediterranean security environment for some time to come. State failure and dysfunctional rule could have an isolating effect on a region badly in need of economic and political development. At worst, it could produce spillovers of terrorism and political violence, even the collapse of ostensibly strong regimes such as the current order in Egypt.

Instability and conflict in West Africa and the Sahel have become drivers of insecurity for the Maghreb and Europe.³ The French intervention in Mali was arguably as much about containing the consequences of chaos within that country for Algeria and the Western Mediterranean as a whole. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and similar groups operating across North and West Africa are now at the forefront of Western concerns about transnational — more properly “transregional” — risks in an arc stretching from Nigeria to Western Europe.

Algeria's enormous geographic expanse and poorly monitored borders make that country a front line state in relation to West African risks. The memory of Algeria's descent into violence in the 1990s, and the opaque nature of the regime, cause neighbors such as Morocco and Tunisia, and

Europe, to cast a wary eye on the country's stability and regional policies. Algeria's uncertain future is one of the key open questions for Mediterranean security. Other challenges arise from the Atlantic approaches to the Mediterranean, where new trafficking routes are bringing drugs, arms, and money from Latin America to West Africa and onward through the Maghreb to Europe.

For all of the development assistance provided to the southern Mediterranean over the past decades, and despite some notable success stories — Turkey and Morocco offer two very different examples — the prosperity gap between north and south in the Mediterranean remains dramatic. Only the gap between North and South Korea is larger among essentially neighboring societies. Simultaneous conflicts and chaotic conditions from sub-Saharan Africa to Pakistan are generating waves of economic and political migrants, desperate to reach the relative prosperity of southern Europe. The scale of this mobility is striking. Almost 2 million refugees have fled to or through Turkey since the start of the war in Syria; many more have crossed to Jordan and Lebanon. Over 1 million Christians have fled Iraq, and over half a million from Syria. Tens of thousands of migrants have crossed the Mediterranean by sea in recent years; 6,000 just to Italy. Over 3,000 have died in the Mediterranean in 2014 alone, the vast majority of the estimated 4,000 migration deaths worldwide in the same period.⁴ The Mediterranean region is in the grips of a human security crisis — a crisis affecting the security and welfare of individuals — unprecedented since the end of World War II. The burden of addressing this crisis has fallen mainly on the governments and societies of southern Europe, with very negative consequences for social cohesion and political stability. Notwithstanding the threat of terrorism and political violence, and the persistence of state-to-state frictions, it is no exaggeration to say that Mediterranean security in the second decade of the 21st century is as much, perhaps more about human security as about traditional security concerns. The resulting demands on European and NATO policy are unlikely to diminish anytime soon, and could worsen dramatically in the event of a new collapse in Egypt or elsewhere.

Eastern Conflict, Southern Exposure

Developments in the Black Sea and Eurasia are once again influencing the Mediterranean security equation.

1 On the phenomena of Islamist radicalization in Europe and foreign fighters, see Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

2 See Henri J. Barkey, “Turkey's Syria Predicament,” in Toby Dodge and Emile Hokayem, eds., *Middle Eastern Security: The U.S. Pivot and the Rise of ISIS* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2014), pp. 99-122. See also, Murat Ozcelik, Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Fall 2014, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 27-36.

3 See Cristina Barrios and Tobias Koepf, eds., “Re-Mapping the Sahel: Transnational Security Challenges and International Responses,” *ISSUE*, Report No. 19, June 2014, European Union Institute for Security Studies.

4 Tara Brian and Frank Laczko, eds., *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost During Migration* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2014).

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In historical terms, the containment of Russian power — the “Eastern question” on Europe’s periphery — has affected great power relations further south. Even with contemporary Russia’s very modest capacity for power projection beyond the Black Sea, more competitive and risk-prone relations between Russia and the West have significant consequences for Mediterranean security. On Syria and Iran, the lack of Russian cooperation will severely complicate an already bleak outlook for stability in the Levant. The nature and extent of Russian engagement can have significant implications for the internal and external behavior of Algeria and Egypt. Turkey is among the countries most dependent on Russian energy supplies, and has a direct stake in both the stability of the Black Sea region and the inviolability of borders. Deteriorating relations between Russia and NATO impose uncomfortable choices on Ankara, with security partnership and economic interests in direct competition. Turkey’s sovereignty consciousness is especially evident in Ankara’s approach to Black Sea security, a fact that will surely complicate both NATO and EU strategy.

A return to near Cold War conditions could mean a return to higher levels of Russian and Western naval presence in the Mediterranean, with all that this would imply for regional diplomacy and base access. After a period of 20 years in which Russia essentially withdrew from any military presence in the Mediterranean, recent years have seen a modest return to naval deployments and joint exercises. To the extent that bases in the Crimea are closely linked to Russian power projection in the Mediterranean, Russian activity in the region is likely to receive much closer scrutiny. This will likely extend to the economic realm, and this could be meaningful for Cyprus, where there has been heavy Russian investment. Efforts to develop Cypriot and other Eastern Mediterranean gas resources may increasingly be seen as one of several options to help offset Europe’s reliance on Russian exports.⁵ In reality, the ability of new energy finds in the region to offset European reliance on Russian gas is probably very modest. This is a vision of conditions much as they were in the 1980s, but with greatly reduced power and potential in Moscow, of far

greater flux in most littoral states, but with multiple opportunities for competitive policies. Beyond Syria, arms sales to Algeria, Libya, and Egypt could become a more prominent instrument of Russia’s Mediterranean diplomacy (and cash flow). The increased tempo of Russian naval exercises and port visits in the Mediterranean is also part of this equation. In a very different mode, it is not inconceivable that Greece could turn to Russian sources if Athens is frustrated in its attempts to secure and consolidate a new deal with its international creditors.

Growing U.S. and European concerns about Russian behavior in Ukraine may well include the Mediterranean as well as more obvious flashpoints in the Baltic and Eastern Europe. U.S. forces might also be drawn into naval clashes arising from resource disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶ Under these conditions, there may be more debate about the level of U.S. forces in the Mediterranean. The presence of the Sixth Fleet, a traditional dimension of the U.S. presence in the Mediterranean, has waned since the end of the Cold War, a consequence of demands elsewhere and the general reduction in ship strength. It would take a great deal to reverse this trend, but the debate on this question is surely coming.

New Actors Emerge

Mediterranean countries, European and North American partners, and Russia are not the only stakeholders in Mediterranean affairs. Rising powers in Asia have acquired a strong stake in regional development and security, with China in the vanguard. To date, this presence is largely felt in the economic and political realm, but a security aspect is also emerging. During the violent fall of the Gaddafi regime, China was forced to evacuate some 30,000 workers from the country (Turkey evacuated a similar number of its own citizens). In Algeria, Chinese involvement in the country’s energy industry and other sectors of the economy is longstanding, and Chinese workers were victims of attacks by Islamic extremists on gas facilities in the south of the country. In a more positive sense, China has become a leading investor in port infrastructure around the Mediterranean, most prominently in the port of Piraeus. The role of the Suez Canal in maritime trade between Asia and European markets gives China and other Asian exporters an important stake in access to this vital artery, and the stability of Egypt. This interest may wane over time as ever larger container vessels come to dominate this trade, unless

5 See Sir Michael Leigh, “Eastern Mediterranean Gas Won’t Solve Europe’s Energy Dilemmas,” *Transatlantic Take*, December 16, 2014, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2014/12/16/eastern-mediterranean-gas-wont-solve-europes-energy-dilemmas>. See also the series of related analyses from GMF’s Eastern Mediterranean energy project, including Sarah Vogler and Eric V. Thompson, “Gas Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Implications for Regional Maritime Security,” *GMF Policy Brief*, March 5, 2015, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/gas-discoveries-eastern-mediterranean-implications-regional-maritime-security>.

6 This point is made in Vogler and Thompson.

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Cairo manages to finance a substantial expansion of the canal.

Leaving aside China's active policy in Africa, on the margins of the Mediterranean hinterland, Beijing's direct security involvement in the region is limited. There is modest potential for this to change. One possible indicator is a joint naval exercise with Russia, planned for the spring of 2015. India's commercial and diplomatic ties to a region that Indian strategists view as a far-flung part of "West Asia," are also growing. India is now the largest purchaser of Israeli arms and defense-related services.

The role of the Gulf States, while not new, is also growing in important respects. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the smaller Gulf States are an established presence as investors and aid donors. In recent years, they have also become a more visible element in security terms. Qatar's alleged support for Islamist factions in Libya (Qatar was also part of the coalition that toppled Colonel Gaddafi) is one example. The UAE's reported air strikes in that country are another. Iran's — and others' — proxies in Iraq, Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon have taken on new significance under conditions of protracted chaos and conflict in the Levant. Missile and nuclear proliferation risks emanating from the Gulf will be felt first and foremost in the Mediterranean, including Southern Europe. A durable nuclear deal with Iran, and potentially a broader *détente* between Tehran and the West could have positive effects on security in the Levant. In the meantime, Iran continues to play a role as an arms supplier and advisor to Hezbollah, Hamas, and Shiite forces in Syria and Iraq. Iran has also made small, symbolic naval deployments to the Mediterranean in recent years. Taken together, the growing Iranian involvement in the Levant has made Iran an increasingly significant actor on the security scene in the Eastern Mediterranean. Further west, their role is marginal.

Mediterranean Strategies in Flux

Largely as a consequence of the Arab revolutions that began in Tunisia, went adrift in Egypt and Libya, and have left Syria in chaos, the world is focused on the Mediterranean. If one adds to this list the near-complete impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, mounting instability in Lebanon, and the more modest potential for conflict over new energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is arguable that the region tops the list of global strategic concerns, in sheer number and variety, if not absolute

severity. With the possible exception of the Iranian nuclear issue — at some distance geographically, but with strong influences on Mediterranean security — flashpoints in the Asia-Pacific and on Russia's western borders surely lead the way in terms of existential risks. In both cases, the potential for rapid and unpredictable escalation, and the nuclear backdrop, are essential elements. But this sub-existential quality of Mediterranean risks raises important questions of its own. Not least, will the United States remain as a Mediterranean security actor in the face of more compelling challenges elsewhere?

Oddly, the proliferation of crises and security challenges around the Mediterranean Basin has not been accompanied by any commensurate interest in Mediterranean institutions and strategies, or even Mediterranean identity as a way out of the region's strategic conundrums. Explicitly Mediterranean initiatives have proliferated in periods of relative stability. Examples include the notion of a CSCM (Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean), based on the CSCE experience, proposed as the Cold War ended, or the heyday of the Barcelona Process and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue in the mid-1990s. These were times of crisis in Algeria, and near crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean. But they were also more permissive periods for multilateral diplomacy, not least because progress was being made in the Middle East peace process.

The GMF Mediterranean Strategy Group discussions in Genoa and Naples underscored some key features of the prevailing security environment. Alongside the rise of extra-regional influences, and the decline of explicitly "Mediterranean" strategies, the scene is characterized by the primacy of internal security concerns, both traditional and non-traditional, and the persistence of multiple unresolved conflicts within, and on the periphery of the Mediterranean. Across the region, the power of states is increasingly constrained, and in some cases, states are quite literally under siege. In the southern Mediterranean, this phenomenon has direct, hard security implications. In Mediterranean Europe, challenges to the state take a very different form, driven by economic stringency and problems of governance. But here, too, there may be security consequences arising from violent protest, political radicalization, and intolerance. Thus far, violent instability of this kind has been remarkably limited, even in Greece. But the risk remains.

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European Union and NATO strategies toward the south are in flux. The EU is increasingly inclined to disaggregate its omnibus neighborhood policy — an approach that has proved dysfunctional both in the east and the south. One of EU High Representative Federica Mogherini's early initiatives has been to launch a review of Europe's strategy on the periphery of the continent. The result is likely to be a more focused policy, concentrating on countries with high potential for stability and development in the southern Mediterranean, notably Tunisia and Morocco. European institutions will also need to meet the growing demand for assistance to Italy and others facing significant migration and human security challenges. These questions will also need to be addressed in the new European security strategy document being drafted by Mogherini and her team.

NATO, too, will need to adapt. Security risks in the Baltic and around the Black Sea have taken first priority since the Wales summit. Driven in large measure by the proliferation of chaotic conditions around the southern Mediterranean, and the spread of ISIS-affiliated movements to Egypt, Libya, and Algeria, the Alliance is now focused on developing a parallel "strategy south." While less obviously demanding of conventional military capability, Mediterranean security risks bring their own difficult dynamics. Looking south, there is no obvious focal point for deterrence and defense; risk and exposure are more diffuse. NATO's dual exposure — East and South — has put European security back on the transatlantic agenda. It also casts in sharp relief a traditional question about competing strategic demands and shared risks within Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. Are NATO allies (and EU members) equally exposed to risks emanating from the east and the south? During the Cold War, the southern flank was a secondary theater. The clear defense priorities were in the north and the center. The defense of Frankfurt and Rome or Ankara, were never really equivalent concerns, despite their formal equivalence in Article V terms. What is the reality today? The risk of Russian pressure, in whatever form, is keenly felt in Poland and the Baltic states, but the NATO rapid reaction forces being developed in response are more likely to be employed in the south than the east. The close links between Mediterranean security risks and Europe's internal security concerns are also part of the equation, and these concerns are hardly limited to front-line states in southern Europe as recent attacks in Paris, Brussels, and Copenhagen make clear. In a reversal of the prevailing Cold War realities, NATO's southern exposure

may now be more widely felt across the Alliance, whereas the sense of exposure to the acute, ongoing crisis in Ukraine is felt largely in those countries close to the crisis in the east and the north.

Two Centuries of U.S. Involvement

The United States has been a Mediterranean power for over 200 years. Beyond securing the country's immediate maritime interests off the East Coast, the Western Mediterranean was the first area of active U.S. security engagement, beginning with anti-piracy operations in North Africa in the early years of the 19th century. Southern Europe was among the first focal points for U.S. diplomacy, much of it commercially driven, and Morocco was actually the first state to establish diplomatic relations with the new American republic. U.S. trade with the Ottoman Empire (the "Turkey trade") was extensive — for over a century the United States was the leading exporter of petroleum products to southern Europe and the Middle East. U.S. missionary activity in the Levant was another facet of this engagement. Their descendants across the United States remain a source of intellectual and political interest in Turkey. With Britain and France, the United States was a leading source of diplomatic and financial support for independence movements in the Balkans, above all in Greece. From the later years of the 19th century and well into the 20th, immigration from southern Europe provided another link between the Mediterranean world and U.S. civil society. These links continue to be significant today. Through two world wars, and an extended Cold War, the United States' transatlantic engagement has always had a significant "southern" dimension, even if this aspect of U.S. strategy was often subordinate to demands elsewhere on the continent.

The United States' Mediterranean engagement is old and multi-faceted. But it has rarely if ever been accompanied by a strong sense of the Mediterranean as a coherent strategic space, and area of U.S. interest per se. In policy terms, the traditional U.S. approach has been to divide the Mediterranean along geopolitical lines, with a fairly strict bureaucratic and intellectual division between Europe, including southern Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey, as a NATO member, has generally been considered part of Europe in this construct. The notable exceptions to this bifurcated approach have been in the U.S. military commands, where areas of responsibility have spanned

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Europe and adjacent areas to the south (the U.S. Sixth Fleet has an explicitly Mediterranean mandate).

One consequence of this absence of “Mediterranean” mandates, institutions, and strategies on the U.S. side has been a persistent inability to respond to Mediterranean initiatives emanating from Europe. Washington was never particularly well informed about, or engaged with European partners on, the EU’s Barcelona Process. And despite a brief flurry of interest in the Union for the Mediterranean in its early stages — the original proposal appealed to a U.S. preference for practical, integrative projects — the current European discussion about reinventing Mediterranean strategy does not yet figure in any meaningful way in the U.S. debate. This could change as partners on both sides of the Atlantic seek new forms of burden-sharing to meet pressing socio-political and security challenges emanating from Europe’s southern periphery. Indeed, it is possible that the European and U.S. approaches to the Mediterranean may actually converge to the extent that EU policy toward the southern neighborhood becomes more differentiated and bilateral.

What is at Stake? Drivers of U.S. Interest

U.S. officials and strategists may not refer to the Mediterranean per se as often as their counterparts across the Atlantic. But crises and relationships around the Mediterranean still occupy an inordinate amount of attention for policymakers, and demands from this quarter may be growing. Broadly, U.S. stakes in the Mediterranean today have three key drivers. These are not new, but their relative weight has evolved over time.

First, the United States will be interested in the Mediterranean as an element in European security. This was the overwhelming U.S. interest during the Cold War, but has not been a leading driver of U.S. strategy in recent decades. This could change as the threat from groups such as ISIS, and the problem of failed and failing states around the southern Mediterranean comes to the fore on the European security agenda. Just as NATO after the 2014 Wales summit has focused on strategy for the east, the Alliance is beginning to focus on a parallel strategy for the south. NATO planners are exploring options for strengthening the capacity for crisis management in the Mediterranean. This could include an overhaul of NATO’s long-standing but troubled Mediterranean Dialogue, a seven-member multilateral framework for partnership. The dialogue,

established a decade ago, faces multiple challenges. Tensions, notably between Israel and Arab partners, and Turkey and Israel, have hobbled cooperation. Enthusiasm for the initiative is uneven among the partners (and on the NATO side), and money to fund partnership activities has been a persistent issue. As with EU policy, if multilateral approaches have proven difficult, bilateral arrangements may be the way forward. More generally, NATO’s Mediterranean strategy will benefit from an approach that favors collaboration with a range of institutions already active in the region, from the EU to UN agencies.

In hard security terms, U.S. engagement will be closely tied to European defense concerns. The U.S.-led initiative on ballistic missile defense, now linked to NATO planning, is largely reliant on assets afloat in the Mediterranean. The NATO allies most exposed to current ballistic missile risks, and most concerned about missile defense, are those in southern Europe and Turkey. To the extent that counter-terrorism becomes a more prominent planning concern for the United States and the Alliance in Europe, the Mediterranean will be the leading theater for manned and unmanned platforms. Indeed, analysts are increasingly concerned about the ISIS and al Qaeda threat to shipping and naval forces in the Mediterranean.⁷ As noted earlier, the command and deployment arrangements made to reassure allies in the north and east are almost certainly more likely to be employed in future Mediterranean contingencies. NATO’s southern members are keen to underscore their relevance to security requirements in the south.

In political terms, too, southern Europe may well occupy more U.S. attention as part of general US-European relations in the years ahead. The United States had been a key beneficiary of the progressive “Europeanization” of southern Europe from the 1980s onward. Growing prosperity and entry into the European foreign policy mainstream greatly simplifies what had long been a set of distinctive and often contentious bilateral relationships, especially with Greece and Spain. An economically troubled southern Europe could limit the ability of these countries to play an active role in regional affairs, and to support U.S. strategy in the Mediterranean. A set of difficult and renationalized relationships with the EU’s and NATO’s southern members could complicate U.S. strategy just as demands around the Mediterranean increase.

⁷ See Seumas Milne and Ewen MacAskill, “Al-Qaeda Planning Kamikaze Attacks on Ships in the Mediterranean, Cables Claim,” *The Guardian*, February 25, 2015; Seth Cropsey, “When Islamic State Starts Hitting Ships,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2015.

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Second, the United States will continue to have a stake in the Mediterranean as a route to other critical regions. The Sixth Fleet is much reduced from its Cold War size, but the ability to transit the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, and to move forces and material between the Atlantic, the Gulf, and the Indian Ocean remains important — perhaps more important given the growing demands for naval presence in Asia. Over-flight arrangements, and the ability to use key facilities such as Incirlik airbase in Turkey, and bases elsewhere in southern Europe, for operations in the Levant and the Middle East are also part of the equation. The question of non-NATO uses of Incirlik is especially vexing for U.S. planners. Both Washington and Ankara trumpet the strategic value of Incirlik, but in reality, the United States has not been allowed to use Incirlik for offensive air operations since 1991. The use of Incirlik in nearby operations against ISIS in Syria and Iraq has been limited to logistical support.

Third, the Mediterranean will be a center of crises and flashpoints, making it a place of strategic consequence in its own right. Rudimentary maps of global flashpoints — a favorite item for planners everywhere — illustrate the sheer number of current and potential crises arrayed around the Mediterranean Basin, or very nearby. From the Sahel to the Levant, from Libya and Egypt to the crises on Turkey's borders with Syria and Iraq, the list of demands on U.S. diplomacy, defense, and assistance is long. To this must be added the unresolved Cyprus dispute, no longer a security problem per se, but a leading impediment to security strategies, not least explicit EU-NATO cooperation and relations with Ankara. Finally, the impasse in Israeli-Palestinian relations has ongoing costs for transatlantic interests, and continues to occupy the attention of successive U.S. administrations. A comprehensive Middle East settlement remains the ultimate diplomatic prize for Washington. Second-term U.S. administrations may have a history of energetic initiatives in the peace process, but the outlook for this now looks decidedly bleak. The net weight of all these Mediterranean conflicts and crises on U.S. international policy is substantial, especially at a time of growing tension with Russia and great power competition in Asia.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Our Mediterranean Strategy Group discussions, and this analysis, suggest a number of conclusions and implications for U.S. and transatlantic policy. A few points stand out.

First, Europe's southern exposure will be a key driver of U.S. strategy in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. To the extent that the United States remains actively involved in the Levant and North Africa, and in the Mediterranean region generally, this engagement is now more likely to be framed in terms of European security. After a decade of intervention, many in the U.S. public and strategic elites are disillusioned with the unfinished revolutions and stalled peace process in the Middle East. There is considerable wariness about new commitments, especially those defined in traditional policy terms. Given this reality, much of the new rationale and demand for Mediterranean engagement will flow from Europe, and from the United States' stake in European security. Even with new defense needs in the east, Washington can and should integrate Mediterranean security concerns in European planning. Over the next decade, U.S. policy and presence in the region is likely to be driven as much by Europe's security exposure as by long-standing concerns for stability in the Gulf and on Israel's borders.

Second, innovative approaches will be required to offset lower levels of presence. The proliferation of crises and flashpoints around the Mediterranean, and Europe's concern about these risks, will drive a steady demand for U.S. military presence, especially naval and air power, alongside enabling assets such as transport and air refueling required for operations conducted by others. But apart from modest new deployments to support NATO's ballistic missile defense architecture afloat, there is little prospect of a return to the sizeable forces permanently based in and around the Mediterranean in earlier decades. As NATO designs new rapid response arrangements for the Alliance as a whole, there should be opportunities to develop arrangements to reassure and reinforce allies in the south. Conventional defense is not the challenge in this quarter, but maritime security, counter-terrorism, and human security certainly will be on the agenda. One example along these lines will be the basing of U.S. drones at Sigonella in Sicily.

Third, Turkey and Southern European states are key partners, but their roles cannot be taken for granted. It is difficult to imagine an effective transatlantic policy toward the chaos in Syria and the Levant without the active participation of Ankara. Similarly, NATO and EU members in southern Europe will be key partners in addressing multiple longer-term risks emanating from the Southern Mediterranean. In both cases, the contributions are as

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much political and economic as military. But Turkey and southern Europe are, for quite different reasons, limited in their ability to play an active role in Mediterranean security. Turkey's apparent diffidence regarding U.S. and European strategy in its neighborhood, the country's flirtation with alternative geopolitical orientations, and persistent tensions with Israel have alienated key regional actors and complicate the outlook for cooperation. Ankara's reluctance to allow the use of Incirlik airbase for air operations in the anti-ISIS campaign is a leading example of this ambivalent approach. Southern European countries should be leaders in NATO and EU strategy toward the Mediterranean, but economic stringency and political distractions are affecting the behavior of governments from Lisbon to Athens. In the case of Greece, the policy distractions are of a different and entirely more serious order, and brinkmanship in the Greek debt crisis could carry with it geopolitical as well as financial risks. Washington will be a strategic stakeholder in southern European recovery.

Finally, NATO and EU policy toward the Mediterranean will benefit from bringing other institutions into the mix. Virtually all of the multilateral institutions engaged in the Mediterranean are reviewing their strategies. NATO is actively debating a new "strategy south," including ways to reshape its framework for Mediterranean partnership, the Mediterranean Dialogue. The EU has embarked on what should be a wholesale redesign of the European Neighborhood Policy. A key goal will be to separate the Mediterranean dimension from the very different requirements to Europe's east. It is also likely to be more targeted and bilateral.⁸ The OSCE is attempting to fashion its own Mediterranean initiative. In a departure from previous approaches, all of these strategic reviews emphasize the need to work across institutional lines in a region where diverse instruments, from aid and investment to diplomacy and military power, are required. EU-NATO collaboration offers the greatest potential rewards, but the Cyprus dispute stands in the way. This should not prevent policymakers from deepening informal cooperation between two institutions with leading stakes in the management of Mediterranean security problems. Even if official NATO-EU cooperation is impractical, there is every reason for the EU and Washington to deepen their cooperation on warning, presence and response on Europe's southern periphery.

The views expressed in GMF publications and commentary are the views of the author alone.

About the Author

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⁸ Sir Michael Leigh, "A New Neighborhood Strategy for Europe," in *Ideas for Europe's New Leadership: A Transatlantic Perspective*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 2014, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/ideas-europes-new-leadership-transatlantic-perspective>.