

# ➤ The Security of the Mediterranean Sea

Michael Codner

**R**egions of great instability surround the southern and eastern borders of the Mediterranean Sea. Syria's enduring crisis has implications for the stability and security of Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Israel is beleaguered with uncertainties over its future relationship with Palestine. The Maghreb has failed to attain stable governance since the Arab uprisings. Egypt has endured riots after the military removal of the Muslim Brotherhood government that bode ill for its stability. Libya's faces an uncertain future after the overthrow of Colonel Gaddafi. Mali's crisis that provoked the French intervention points to continuing instabilities in the Sahel region. At the same time, the Eurozone crisis has hit the northern side of the Mediterranean, and most Southern European states currently face an acute economic crisis. Fiscal austerity that comes with the crisis will likely further strain the already inadequate defence spending in Southern Europe and give rise to new security concerns.

In light of these issues, this paper addresses the range of possible emergent threats, challenges and responsibilities for European nations with Mediterranean coasts and (more generally) for the EU and NATO in the medium and long term. There is huge uncertainty in the levels of risk associated with threats and challenges of future Mediterranean security. Nonetheless, Southern European defence budgets will more than likely decline and maritime military capabilities in particular will diminish. This paper proposes greater integration of European maritime security capabilities through more coherent NATO and EU policies, forces and operational planning processes.

## **DEFINING MARITIME SECURITY**

A comprehensive understanding of the definition of 'maritime security' is needed to tackle the complexities of Mediterranean security from a Southern European perspective. This approach involves the whole spectrum of security from combat in the context of a major war to the safety of people and assets in contexts related to human violence, crime or environmental protection. An exclusive definition will likely lead to conclusions on the capabilities needed to meet security challenges that will not make best use of resources. In particular, maritime platforms used for security (surface, air or subsurface) will be able to take on a wide range of roles across the security spectrum provided they are configured in agile and adaptable ways. A coherent and integrated approach amongst individual government departments is essential for Europe to make the best use of its limited maritime security.

Territorial defence and provisions for other high intensity combat obligations are on the most violent end of the security spectrum. Threats of this kind involving the Mediterranean will not likely cause concern for Europe in the near to medium term. However, Europe in the context of NATO and as a European geostrategic entity should have the capacity for high intensity combat to prevent an emergent or re-emergent malignant power from using the threat of military violence. The Mediterranean may not necessarily be the scene for deterrent posture, but the platforms delivering these deterrent capabilities could be used for other security roles and purposes.

One very topical and violent threat is that from missile attacks, whether ballistic, cruise, rocket or even nuclear. Attack from Iran is at present the defining threat scenario. The Mediterranean Sea is a key element of ballistic missile defence in the US' Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA), which focuses first and foremost on European security. A number of European nations either provide or intend to provide the territory, capabilities and funds to support PAA and NATO missile defence.<sup>1</sup> Turkey provides the land site in Malatya for the US radar. Italy, France and Spain could provide seaborne anti-ballistic missile capabilities. Iran's acquisition of nuclear missiles could cause other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia to acquire their own nuclear capabilities. Nuclear proliferation in a region prone to instability and revolution carries the threat of having nuclear weapons fall into the hands of factions opposed to the West. Turkey recently asked NATO for protection against missile and rocket attacks from Syria.<sup>2</sup> In this case the Allied response from the US, Germany and the Netherlands would come in the form of land-based Patriot systems.

During and since the Cold War, the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean has assured NATO members that the US could protect them against major attacks on their territory or interests. The US, however, is losing its dominant role as a world maritime power and has priorities elsewhere. Washington has always put pressure on Europe to do more for its own security and will likely increase this pressure in the future.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the US still has enduring military commitments in the region, most notably in Israel.

Terrorism could also involve extreme levels of violence against European nations. The Mediterranean has history predating 9/11 in this respect, with the 1985 hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro by the Palestine Liberation Front. Terrorists could find a number of other ways use the sea to carry out threats, such as using explosives to damage vessels, passengers and crews or surrounding areas. They could also use vessels to transport explosives and other chemical, biological or nuclear materials, including fissile material, to use ashore.<sup>4</sup>

The sea could play an important role in the evacuation of European nationals from crisis areas. An *ad hoc* European structure based in Malta, for example, helped to coordinate evacuations in Lebanon War in 2008 and Libya in 2011. These examples did not involve high levels of combat. Still, a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) could be challenging because the task may emerge at short notice with limited intelligence and time for advanced planning. The uncertainty of where evacuations could take place requires preparing for combat to defend safe areas and conduct retreats. It is thus important to have the right military capabilities to dominate military escalation deployed from a sea base. Any NEO will almost inevitably be a coalition operation, but the partners will usually be those with numbers of nationals to be rescued. European governments cannot presume that the US will have a national responsibility or interest to lead or that larger nations will be expected by their electorates to protect their citizens. Southern European nations may have to take on this responsibility. This will require them to provide resources (for instance bases and military capabilities) for multinational operations in return for other nations' support for the evacuation of their civilians elsewhere in the world.

<sup>1</sup> Ballistic missile attack was declared as a NATO Article V in the 2010 Lisbon Summit.

<sup>2</sup> <http://euobserver.com/defence/116743>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21583679-only-big-country-europe-increasing-defence-spending-poland-wants-more-say>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/art4.html>.

The evolving nature of the government of the Russian Federation under President Putin poses problems of uncertainty of intent. The Kremlin clearly wants to maintain a presence in the region, but it is unclear where its foothold will be. In June 2013, Russia announced that it would permanently maintain about a dozen warships in the Mediterranean for its national security. The purpose of this deployment is unclear, but it is reminiscent of the Cold War strategy of establishing a global Soviet naval presence to counteract the maritime dominance of the West.

## CONSTABULARY CHALLENGES

A holistic approach to the definition of maritime security requires addressing threats in the larger context of economic, political and social development. For instance, crises and wars may require European nations to take part in enforcement sanctions to prevent the movement of weapons (Bosnia 1992-1995, Libya 2011 and Syria at present) and in possible economic sanctions. These actions are essentially constabulary,<sup>5</sup> but typically discharged by major surface combatants.<sup>6</sup> Other predominantly constabulary maritime security operations include countering criminal activities, such as arms and narcotic trafficking. North Africa supplies cannabis through the Strait of Gibraltar, South America supplies cocaine through North Africa and Asia traffics heroin through weakly policed areas, such as the Balkans across the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea.<sup>7</sup>

Piracy is presently not a problem in the Mediterranean because of the high levels of response capability and its deterrent effect, but Europe's dwindling commitment to maritime security capabilities coupled with instability in weak states in the Maghreb and Levant could raise this threat. The Mediterranean has major international trade routes between the Suez Canal and the Straits of Gibraltar and Bosphorus, and also to and from European seaports that moved some 27.6 percent of sea trade through European ports.<sup>8</sup>

Control of illegal immigration in Malta, Italy (especially in Lampedusa), Spain and Greece presents a huge constabulary security challenge.<sup>9</sup> The recent uprisings, revolutions and instability in the Arab nations of the Southern Mediterranean have exacerbated this problem. Long term future security trends including climate change, water shortages, poverty and dispossession will prompt more movement of people toward wealthier and more liberal environments such as Europe. The maritime route is obvious, albeit dangerous.

Protection of fish stocks is a constabulary task often assigned to military naval forces, but is also outsourced or assigned to coastguard forces. The EU has a Common Fisheries Policy to protect stocks and regulate competition, but this must be enforced within nations' territorial seas and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). This requirement is a significant consideration in developing a nation's military and constabulary capabilities.<sup>10</sup>

5 Allowing the minimum use of violence only as a last resort to enforce a law or sanction mandated by a legal authority.

6 In particular, destroyers and frigates.

7 B. Germond, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean: Towards a Comprehensive Approach*, [http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CElQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fkms2.isn.ethz.ch%2Fserviceengine%2FFiles%2FESDP%2F122729%2Fchaptersecti%2Fdocument%2Fffdb6db1b-3624-4844-b320-a69078d946a3%2Fen%2F9.pdf&ei=fKQNUo-Koi2hQfOk4HQCA&usg=AFQjCNGKJkFTC7IRJCQdBy9VSCzEf\\_ji0A&sig2=FglmZ3gonh4AsPb34ZGLfw](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CElQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fkms2.isn.ethz.ch%2Fserviceengine%2FFiles%2FESDP%2F122729%2Fchaptersecti%2Fdocument%2Fffdb6db1b-3624-4844-b320-a69078d946a3%2Fen%2F9.pdf&ei=fKQNUo-Koi2hQfOk4HQCA&usg=AFQjCNGKJkFTC7IRJCQdBy9VSCzEf_ji0A&sig2=FglmZ3gonh4AsPb34ZGLfw).

8 European Union, *Mediterranean and Black Sea Coastal Region Statistics*, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Mediterranean\\_and\\_Black\\_Sea\\_coastal\\_region\\_statistics#Handling\\_of\\_seaborne\\_goods](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Mediterranean_and_Black_Sea_coastal_region_statistics#Handling_of_seaborne_goods).

9 A. Gomes, 'Policy responses to people-trafficking in the Mediterranean,' *Maritime Security in the Mediterranean: Challenges and Policy Responses*, SDA Discussion Paper, June 2011.

10 [http://www.iai.it/pdf/mediterraneo/GMF-IAI/Mediterranean-paper\\_03.pdf](http://www.iai.it/pdf/mediterraneo/GMF-IAI/Mediterranean-paper_03.pdf).

## SEA CLAIMS, ACCESS AND COMPETITION FOR MARINE RESOURCES

Disputes over territorial seas and EEZs between European allies make achieving a coherent and integrated European approach to maritime security in the Mediterranean quite difficult. These disputes include those between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean Sea and islands along the Turkish coast, Croatia's claims to an ecological and fisheries protection zone in the Adriatic (an issue during its accession to the EU) and the current dispute between Spain and the UK over the sovereignty of Gibraltar that centres on an artificial reef created by the latter that allegedly affects Spanish fishing.<sup>11</sup>

The discovery of large oil and gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean has heightened disputes over EEZs. Northern Cyprus claims a portion of Cyprus' EEZ. Cyprus disputes the EEZ border with Turkey, and it also has an agreement with Israel over joint exploitation of EEZs. Lebanon, meanwhile, claims that this agreement overlaps its own EEZ.<sup>12</sup>

New disputes will likely emerge between European nations in the long term. New regimes in North Africa and the Levant could also make claims to territorial seas and EEZs currently disputed by other nations. Navies may have to conduct military Freedom of Navigation (FON) operations to prevent acceptance of these claims.<sup>13</sup>

## BENIGN MARINE TASKS

One aspect of the broad definition of security is safety, which includes Search and Rescue (SAR). Governments have legal responsibilities for SAR within and beyond territorial seas. Of course, there must be a balance between government responsibility and commercial and private responsibility, particularly in the high seas as territorial seas have individual responsibilities associated with free use of the seas.

Governments need to regulate the movement of shipping through constrained passages in their territorial seas and in international straits in order to minimise the risk of collisions or groundings. Turkey has a particularly challenging responsibility in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, which have very high levels of shipping.

Disasters that require maritime responses could be natural, man-made or even arise on land (for example, one that may require the rescue of an island community). Governments must factor in SAR in creating and sustaining maritime capabilities. The requirement does not have to be delivered by military or constabulary assets, but consideration of these roles may allow economies to plan capabilities.

Another government responsibility regarding safety is in environmental protection, such as dealing with oil spills. Military or constabulary platforms would not typically engage in the clean up, but they may play a role in the initial reporting and enforcement of disposal regulations.

### *Responsibilities and Expectation*

Constabulary and benign tasks in internal waters, territorial seas and contiguous zones are largely the responsibilities of national governments. However, Europe as a whole faces security risks associated with illegal immigration and human trafficking, smuggling of narcotics and weapons and movement of terrorist resources. Whilst Southern Europe is largely a point of entry, much of the flow of people and goods end up

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/gibraltar/10250617/Spanish-fishermen-stage-Gibraltar-artificial-reef-protest.html>.

<sup>12</sup> N. Anzinger, 'Will the Eastern Mediterranean Become the Next Persian Gulf?' in *Middle Eastern Outlook*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 3 July 2013.

<sup>13</sup> FON operations are a form of coercive naval diplomacy in which naval vessels of party deliberately enter the territorial seas claimed by another party to test the other party's response.

in other parts of the continent. Coastal nations should maintain levels of surveillance and interdiction appropriate for the size of their waters and national wealth. This may lead some nations to prioritise these responsibilities at the expense of other defence capabilities. Effective response in intercepting at sea or ashore depends on intelligence and operational information that likely originates hundreds of miles away from territorial seas. This information (and the surveillance required to generate it) comes from a wide range of multinational government sources and from systems overseen by multinational organisations such as the International Maritime Organisation or the commercial sector. There must be a fusion of multiple sources, whether national or multinational, as single sources are likely unreliable and incomplete. The need for effective surveillance direction and interception assets requires robust coordinated command and control arrangements to direct the various national and multi-national responders.

All of the coastal European states in the Mediterranean (including Turkey) are members of NATO which with the exception of Montenegro, Malta and Cyprus, is helpful for multinational inter-operability. NATO's role in maritime security mainly centres on integrating military tasks across the alliance and amongst partners. Since 9/11, NATO has taken on counter-terrorism as a task. Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR in the Mediterranean has operated the Standing Naval Maritime Groups (SNMG) of frigates and destroyers. SNMG2 is specifically configured for the Mediterranean. NATO could assemble a maritime component of a NATO Response Force for major operations. NATO groups and forces draw on the same national assets that could be used for national, EU or other multinational operations.

The remaining maritime security tasks fall into the domain of the EU, which has the ability to integrate economic power and other constabulary and benign security capabilities. Turkey, Albania and Montenegro are the only coastal European nations that are not members of the EU. The EU has a number of structures for maritime security ostensibly fit for purpose. FRONTEX was established in 2004 for the large maritime role of managing the external borders of the Schengen area.<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned earlier, effective responses require good intelligence. This requires governments, the commercial sector and non-government entities to have sufficient levels of trust to engage in intelligence sharing. Information exchange does not present problems when an obvious common purpose exists, such as for disaster relief or countering piracy. However, a reluctance to share information may arise when commercial and other interests (such as border disputes) are involved. Even NATO and EU members have difficulties sharing intelligence, particularly that which comes from communications interceptions and national intelligence agencies.

## **CAPABILITIES**

The EU is in the process of setting up a European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) through FRONTEX that will integrate information from National Coordination Centres in its first phase. It will then focus on 'creating a common information-sharing environment for all national and EU authorities involved in the maritime domain, and include elements as diverse as environmental protection, fisheries control and maritime safety as part of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy'.<sup>15</sup>

NATO has command and control arrangements for the Mediterranean through the Allied Maritime Command Naples, a fully staffed, permanent, multinational operational command. In the past, EU military command and control for specific operations went through the operational headquarters of single nations. The EUNAVFOR model would be the obvious one for a major EU naval military operation in the Mediterranean.

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<sup>14</sup> The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2013/eu-solidarity-and-frontex-fundamental-rights-challenges>.

<sup>15</sup> EU EUROSUR briefing note at <http://www.frontex.europa.eu/eurosur>.

For drug interdiction specifically, FRONTEX facilitates interdiction operations in the Western Mediterranean through CeCLAD(M)<sup>16</sup> and in the Eastern Atlantic through MAOC(N)<sup>17</sup> in Lisbon. No such centre exists for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Space systems and fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters provide surveillance and reconnaissance information for effective prevention and response. Helicopters also provide useful response platforms both for interdiction and rescue operations. Surface vessels are essential for long-term preventive, deterrence and interdiction operations including boarding operations and providing sea bases for helicopters. Table 1 illustrates the scale of capabilities available to European Mediterranean nations, including the UK (which has territorial responsibilities in the Sovereign Territories in Cyprus and Gibraltar). It compares figures for 2008 and 2012 to give an indication of the effects of the economic crisis on defence spending (although the full effects of budget cuts will not be obvious until capabilities require replacement).

**Table 1. European Mediterranean Naval Platforms 2008 and 2012 (including UK)**

	Carriers	Amphibious ships	Submarines	DD/FF	Corvettes	Amphibious craft	MCM	Patrol Craft	Coastguard &c	Totals
2008	5	23	45	97	13	167	90	191	326	787
2012	4	23	43	81	13	125	93	176	459	866

The table shows a decline in military platforms, but a considerable increase in inshore and coastal non-military platforms mainly by Italy and Turkey. The data provides sufficient evidence to establish a trend for the future. However, it does not indicate a focus away from high-end military capabilities toward more immediate challenges such as illegal immigration.<sup>18</sup>

### MULTINATIONAL COHERENCE AND INTEGRATION

NATO attempts to coordinate its members’ forces planning, but it does not do so with the authority of the Cold War era, when (driven by a robust strategic concept) the Integrated Military Structure (IMS) interrogation process held nations accountable for their contributions to defence and flexible response.<sup>19</sup> NATO forces planning also includes US capabilities, which provide the largest contribution in terms of scale. Thus, the process does not encourage the sustainment and development of specifically European capabilities, which are essential especially for Mediterranean maritime security where the balance between national responsibility and common contributions which is key. Notwithstanding an enduring US commitment to defence and security in the Mediterranean and its periphery, US military power will likely decline in the long term as its global security challenges and priorities develop. Moreover, NATO’s forces planning process does not factor in nations’ constabulary forces not owned by ministries of defence. There is thus no coherent approach to develop capabilities for maritime security across the full spectrum. C4ISR structures are specifically designed for military operations and do not typically coordinate non-military actors.<sup>20</sup>

16 Centre de Coordination pour la Lutte Antidrogue en Méditerranée.  
17 Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics).  
18 International Institute for Strategic Studies (IIS), *Military Balance*, 2008 and 2012. DD/FF are destroyers and frigates. MCM are mine countermeasures vessels. ‘Coastguard &c’ refers to non-military owned coastal and offshore constabulary surface platforms.  
19 MC14/3.  
20 Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance. This is very much a military acronym but summarises neatly the challenges of integration and coordination across non-military government departments and multinationally.

The EU has made progress on developing C4ISR capabilities for maritime security. Still, the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP) concept and processes do not stimulate robust military force planning. The EU can coordinate military and non-military assets and has the economic instrument of power, but Turkey – a major power in the Mediterranean – is not an EU member.

NATO and the EU have many opportunities to exploit for better maritime security. France's re-entry to the NATO IMS presents a pragmatic opportunity for a substantial integration of NATO and EU forces, operational planning processes and C4ISR activities. The demands for European maritime security in the Mediterranean and the urgency for its development provide a test case for such a development. As ever, the relationship between the EU and NATO and between the European Commission and European Council provide politically driven impediments.

Coherence, coordination and integration are typically best led by small groups of nations. There are two sets of relationships amongst the major European powers with Mediterranean concerns and interests that could help in this respect. One is the Weimar Plus Agreement, which includes France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Poland. Weimar prioritises challenges at the fringes of Europe. The other is the France-UK Lancaster House Treaties, which prioritises greater bilateral cooperation and coordination in forces planning, the conduct of operations and the creation of a Combined Joint Task Force. The 2013 maritime Exercise Corsican Lion has proven very successful. There are no similar arrangements to integrate Turkey, the other major power.

## **CONCLUSION**

Effective maritime security in a region as complex as the Mediterranean requires well coordinated and integrated resources between government actors (including military, coastguard, search and rescue, border control and police) and nations with similar challenges and objectives. This paper has discussed the EU and NATO nations with responsibilities and interests in the region. Given that European defence budgets may decline in the coming years, efforts must target the integration of C4ISR and coordinated forces planning to make efficient use of financial resources. The most challenged nations have understood the priorities of illegal immigration and have increased constabulary capabilities for coastal and offshore activity. However, financial constraints will likely precipitate a decline in military maritime capabilities. If these nations lack the capabilities for action on the high seas, conventional deterrence will weaken. European nations will not have the means to take preventive and pre-emptive actions, particularly as reduced forces may need to meet demands outside the Mediterranean and may not be available for short-notice responses. Given the turmoil in the Levant and Maghreb and potential crises in the Gulf, Middle East and North Africa, European military and constabulary maritime capabilities will likely be put to the test (especially if the US is drawn to priorities elsewhere). In this scenario, the US would be the first to support greater integration between NATO and the EU in capability and operational planning and in the coordinated development of C4ISR capabilities. North European nations also need to recognise their indirect dependence on Mediterranean maritime security in a range of issues (including illegal immigration, counter-terrorism and secure maritime trade routes) and make the appropriate contributions. A successful approach to maritime security in the Mediterranean depends on these nations abilities to converge their outlooks and strategies. ■