What prospects for transatlantic relations and the Mediterranean?

Professor Stephen Calleaya

Thirty years since the end of the Cold War international relations continue to evolve in a non-linear manner that reflects the ever changing diffusion of power throughout the international system. While the United States remains the sole superpower, its willingness to assume a commensurate role is constantly being questioned. This is most evident when it comes to the transatlantic relationship between the United States and Europe, the bedrock of the Western Alliance during the Cold War.

Given this fluid reality of international relations it is important to accept that some type of change in the pattern of relations from a transatlantic perspective is inevitable. Realpolitik demands that a strategic question be asked regarding what are the future prospects for transatlantic relations and what impact will this changing relationship have on regional relations in the Mediterranean?

Are the common interests, common values and common identity that kept the USA, Canada and Europe working together for decades throughout the Cold War and during the past three decades since the end of the Cold War resilient enough to ensure that transatlantic cooperation continues albeit in a different and perhaps more agile and flexible modus of cooperation?

Since the end of the Second World War and the strategic decision taken by the Truman administration to assume the responsibilities of Britain in the Eastern Mediterranean, this region of the world has witnessed continuous transatlantic engagement. It is thus clear
that the weakening or disappearance of transatlantic cooperation would impact upon the multitude of security challenges currently manifesting themselves in the Mediterranean area and also create a more conducive setting in which the emergence of a security vacuum could become a permanent feature of regional relations.

**The role of extra-regional powers in the Euro Mediterranean area**

An assessment of the influence that the United States has had on regional relations in the Mediterranean highlights the enormous impact that the superpower and the most powerful political and military alliance in the vicinity, NATO, are having on regional relations in the Mediterranean.

Several analysts believed that the diminution of rivalry between the two superpowers with the end of the Cold War would usher in a period where regional affairs would become less important from a strategic perspective. While the disappearance of the Soviet Union has allowed the United States to become much more selective in its foreign policy areas of engagement, regional affairs have quite often dictated the course of such selections as witnessed in the Balkans and more recently in Central Asia.

It is also a fact that there are circumstances that have not been affected by the end of the Cold War. External powers have often intervened in a region to pursue specific self-interests. External interaction in the Persian Gulf is an example of such intrusive behaviour. External actors are attracted to this sub region of the Mediterranean because of their dependence on the reliable flow of oil and the abundance of oil reserves in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the world number one and number two oil reserve countries respectively.

External powers can also become involved in international regions to act as ‘balancers of power’. Extra-regional powers can be invited in by any one country seeking assistance to help preserve or
consolidate a balance of power within their region. The more intense the regional adversity, the more urgently external assistance will be sought. In reality, major great powers can also bully their way into regional relations, but their involvement is greatly facilitated by the presence of regional rivalries.

Wriggins classifies external involvement in international regions under two headings: ‘the pull factor’ and ‘the push factor’. The first dynamic operates when regional actors issue invitations to non-regional powers to intervene. The second dynamic operates when competition among non-regional powers leads them to seek client-states to help bolster their position.1

A number of factors can contribute to an increase in acts of intervention by external powers in a particular area. First, international systems encompassing large number of states which endure high levels of internal instability are likely to have a high incidence of intervention. External powers will be attracted to intervene for at least two reasons: to gain a strategic foothold in the area and to prevent any one actor from becoming a regional hegemon in the region.

Second, regional systems that are characterized by ideological divisions and competition are prone to military intervention. States within international regions seeking to become regional power centres will interfere in the affairs of their neighbours to upset the balance of power in their favour.

A third systemic factor stimulating intervention is asymmetry in the distribution of power. More or less equal states have the capacity to resist each other’s attempts to intervene in their internal affairs. In such systems where distribution of power is equally shared, the incidence of intervention is likely to be low. By contrast, systems in which power is unevenly distributed will be intervention prone.

An analysis of the Mediterranean area reveals that this part of the world consists of all three characteristics that make it very
attractive to extra-regional intervention. The heterogeneous make-up of the Mediterranean and the high level of instability in the different sub regions surrounding the basin are a powerful source of intrusive interest in the Mediterranean. Extra-regional actors are continuously monitoring the position of their allies throughout the world and quite often are prepared to intervene if the position of their ally is in any way threatened. The Mediterranean is also an area where the asymmetry in the distribution of power continues to grow between the prosperous North and the impoverished South.

**The role of a superpower: the United States**

As the only superpower in international relations at present, the United States qualifies as one of the principal intrusive actors in the Mediterranean area. It projects enough political, economic and military authority in the basin to influence the trend of relations through its strong network of bilateral contacts in the area. Key strategic relations include those with Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Portugal, Italy and Spain. The United States’ primary role in international institutions such as NATO, the OSCE, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also allows it to influence the Mediterranean area from a multilateral perspective and enables it to influence sub-regional dynamics in Southern Europe, the Maghreb and the Mashreq in a more covert manner.

The United States has sustained its strong strategic position in the eastern sector of the Mediterranean and especially in the Middle East through comprehensive diplomatic intergovernmental and commercial ties with regional power players. For example, both Israel and Egypt have enjoyed extensive military and political support from the United States in recent decades. The multiplicity of economic, cultural and military ties existing between these regional power centres and Washington reflects the importance attached to Israel and Egypt as a stabilizing and friendly influence in the Middle East.
Throughout the Cold War American interests in the Mediterranean area were largely shaped by the mutual rivalry it shared with the Soviet Union. In February 1947 Britain informed the United States that it was no longer able to guarantee the independence of Greece and Turkey. Confronted with the choice of filling the vacuum left by the British withdrawal or permitting the eastern sector of the Mediterranean to enter the Soviet orbit, the United States chose to protect the strategic waterway by launching the Truman Doctrine of March 1947.

This development represented the formal aspect of an American commitment to the Mediterranean. In a limited way, the American presence was reminiscent of that of Britain in previous centuries: it provided the United States with a foothold for achieving desired ends elsewhere, namely in relation to continental Europe and the Middle East region. The British structure of authority coupled with American economic and military resources provided the cornerstone of US policy that was to prevent any Soviet hegemonic threat to Europe or Africa.

At the height of its power in the Mediterranean basin the United States had the following facilities at its disposal in case a crisis emerged: military bases in Morocco, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Greece. It could also call on British bases in Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Aden. Such an extensive network of facilities provided Washington with plenty of flexibility when it came to formulating strategic policies towards the Mediterranean area.

Two reasons help to explain the rationale behind American containment policy in the early years after the Second World War: to counter Soviet efforts to dominate relations in the eastern Mediterranean and in the Middle East and to counterbalance the actual projection of Soviet military power into continental Europe. The United States made use of Italy in the west and Greece and Turkey in the east to realize this policy of containment. At no time were the internal affairs of the Mediterranean countries considered
as important in themselves. Washington was strictly interested in maintaining a string of bases from which it could monitor any regional patterns of interaction that could alter the balance of power against it. The Mediterranean was therefore regarded as a strategic operating theatre from which the United States could project its foreign policy goals.

The *raison d’être* of American involvement in the Mediterranean during the Cold War can be summed up in order of priority as follows:

- ensuring the free flow of oil to the Western world, particularly Western Europe;
- guaranteeing free access to the sea-lines of communication that connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Eastern world;
- enhancing the political and military cohesion of NATO and defending its continental Europe against Soviet pressure;
- countering Soviet attempts to gain influence throughout the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf, but also the Mashreq in general and the Maghreb.

The United States was therefore perceived as the guardian of Mediterranean stability by its allies, and the custodian of the status quo by its enemies. Although the United States was under constant pressure to monitor Soviet actions in the area, challenges to America’s position in the basin tended to come from two other sources independent of Moscow: First, militant Arab nationalism which was a reflection of the Arab-Israeli conflict and, in the 1980s, manifested itself in the form of international terrorism; second, unsettling domestic trends in some NATO allies, especially the tense relationship that developed between Greece and Turkey.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century America’s foreign policy objectives in the Middle East have been both global and regional in nature. Up to the early 1970s, East-West rivalry dictated that the support of regional actors be one of America’s main concerns in the Mediterranean. This was particularly the case
when both Egypt and Syria turned to the Soviet bloc for armaments in 1955, thus permitting Moscow to gain its first significant foothold in the Arab world.

American intervention in the Suez affair helped the United States shed its image as a new colonial power among some Arab states. But the Iraqi revolution in 1958, the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War quickly undermined Washington’s attempts to become a more effective mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although this conflict did not threaten Western European security directly, apart from the economic panic it caused after oil price hikes in 1973, the threat of a Middle Eastern apocalypse has often been a source of friction between the United States and Europe.\(^3\)

Given the fact that Europe is more dependent on Middle Eastern oil supplies and more vulnerable to the threat of terrorism, and given their deeper historical links with this region, European countries have often been more sympathetic to Arab demands than their American counterparts. For example, Spain, Greece and Turkey joined members of the European Community in 1973 in refusing Washington access to their bases and facilities to support Israel.

The shifting nature of strategic alliances in the post-Cold War world and the very fluid nature of such alliances as witnessed in the build up to the attack against Iraq in the spring of 2003 allow the United States to formulate strategic alliances with European countries on a more ad hoc basis than previously the case when it comes to crisis situations in the Middle East. But the perception of America being more sympathetic than Europe in general towards Israel continues, especially after President Trump’s decision to open the American Embassy in Jerusalem in 2017.

The continuous presence of the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean demonstrates Washington’s strategic interest in this part of the world. During the Cold War the structure of the Fleet consisted of two carriers and approximately fifty surface ships. The rationale for the Sixth Fleet was traditionally based upon east-west considerations,
that is, to bolster NATO’s southern flank and to participate in US nuclear deterrence. On two occasions, the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, the Americans and Soviets engaged in a fierce balance of power struggle with their respective clients in the region, and in the latter incident the United States was even put on a strategic nuclear alert.⁴

Although the United States decided initially to announce cutbacks in its deployable carrier battle groups in the aftermath of the Cold War, the Sixth Fleet continues to fulfil both military and political roles in the Mediterranean. After the terror attacks of September 11th 2001 most Mediterranean states are in favour of the Sixth Fleet remaining in the littoral as insurance against potential forces of instability.⁵

In the past decade technological developments have significantly reduced the role of sea power. Advances in aircraft and missile technology coupled with advancements in lift capabilities and progress in projecting power have resulted in a situation where land-based systems have become far more dominant in the sea combat environment. This is particularly the case in the land-locked Mediterranean.

Nevertheless the sea continues to be of strategic importance as evident during the Balkan campaign of the 1990s and the more recent Syrian campaign. During the NATO intervention in the FR Yugoslavia NATO naval forces took advantage of their positioning in the Adriatic Sea to be able to reach specific targets in Serbia. The Eastern Mediterranean was likewise of significant strategic importance when the United States launched naval based missiles into Syria to deter the aggression of the Syrian regime.

It is primarily in the ‘choke’ points of the basin such as the Straits of Gibraltar, the Straits of Sicily and the Suez Canal that are obligatory points of passage where maritime power, in the form of submarines, remain a dominant force. Submarines retain their comparative advantage due to the high thermal gradients, the elevated salinity
of the sea, the uneven conformation of the seabed, and the heavy traffic of ships in the area.\textsuperscript{6}

On the northern shore of the Mediterranean, American foreign policy has largely been geared towards preserving the status quo throughout NATO’s southern flank. With the challenge of Euro-communism long gone, the United States has largely focused on maintaining coherent cooperative relations between both Greece and Turkey. A combination of both stick and carrot tactics have been applied to ensure base rights in the area. Intensive diplomatic negotiations and an increase in financial assistance enabled Washington to reach agreements with most allies on a regular basis, including Socialist governments in Spain and Greece. The threat of withdrawing assistance to both Athens and Ankara has also allowed the Sixth Fleet home-porting rights for most of the latter half of the last century – Greece withdrew this right between 1974 and 1980 after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

American foreign policy at the start of the new millennium is evolving from the concept of pre-emption that is highlighted in the September 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States.\textsuperscript{7}

American national interests in the post-Cold War Mediterranean are identified as:

- to assure security of access to oil reserves from the Persian Gulf;
- to maintain strategic and political access to Israel;
- to nurture American-Arab relations in the area along the lines of the strong relationship that exists between the United States and Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The United States leadership role in the Kuwaiti-Iraq crisis in the early 1990s and its continuous defence of Saudi Arabia and removal of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in 2003 have enhanced America’s reputation as a proactive player in Middle Eastern affairs. The focus of American interests since the end of the Cold
War have gradually shifted to the eastern sector of the basin, where Washington has intensified its bilateral contacts with countries such as Turkey, Israel and Egypt and through NATO’s AFSOUTH command and control.  

To date there is no clear shift away from America's long held strategic objectives in the Mediterranean. While it is evident that America has adopted a more selective approach when deciding where and when to engage it has not showed any signs of withdrawing from the Mediterranean area of operation.  

Whereas the challenge confronting the United States throughout the 1990s was how to justify domestically the presence of such a formidable force half way around the world, the importance of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and its counterpart, the Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf, are now regarded as essential components of US foreign policy in the aftermath of the 2001 terror attacks. 

The United States continues to play the dual role in the littoral as a strategic guarantor and crisis manager of disputes. The more erratic nature of post-Cold War regional dynamics operating in the Mediterranean has made executing such a policy more difficult. Keeping the sea-lines open for access to and the free flow of oil remains a crucial American goal. Yet the United States has shown a readiness to share the burden of crisis management with the Europeans as demonstrated in its policy approaches towards the former Yugoslavia and Algeria. 

Although the terror attacks of September 11th 2001 dictate that the United States retain a vigilante force in the Mediterranean area it is still a relevant exercise to speculate what would happen if Washington were to withdraw its forces from the Mediterranean, much like the British did in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf during the first half of the twentieth century. 

An American exit from the Mediterranean would immediately result in a power vacuum in the area. Such an outcome would
enable Russia and regional power centres such as Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to conduct more autonomous foreign policies than currently is the case. An American withdrawal would thus see bilateral types of external intervention in regional affairs become the dominant phenomenon replacing multilateral initiatives.

In theory, one may argue that an American exit from the Mediterranean would push countries in the area into harmonizing their foreign policies and adopting a common Mediterranean identity. In reality, a total American withdrawal would make it practically impossible to craft a credible regional security structure.  

The Gulf War in the early 1990s and the intervention in Libya in 2011 illustrated that Southern European countries are prepared to coalesce in a crisis if the United States is willing to lead such a coalition force. Without American supervision, and especially military assistance, it would be impossible that the countries of the Mediterranean could muster the necessary military and political will to act effectively in the fields of crisis management, conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

In the post-Cold War era great powers have three main choices that they can adhere to when conducting their foreign policies. They can act unilaterally, they can advance bilateral relations, or they can engage in multilateral collaboration. The past two decades have seen the United States employ a mixture of all three in its foreign policy agenda, with the unilateralist streak becoming more dominant since the election of President Donald Trump in 2016.  

Advocates of an American unilateral foreign policy would do well to consider the downside to such an approach in international relations. The escalation of cost in going it alone is not something that should be easily dismissed. For example, while the war against Iraq in 2003 could be regarded as a feasible economic enterprise, but the cost of keeping the peace in the same country has run into
hundreds of billions of dollars and led many to argue that the entire war was a mistake.

Second, any great power acting unilaterally in a faraway region runs the risk of being isolated by other main actors in the international system. The transatlantic split that the war against Iraq caused is a clear example of such an outcome. Unilateral action should therefore be reserved to situations where a great power is under direct threat of attack, as the United States was on September 11th 2001.

An assessment of the types of interaction the superpower has with Mediterranean littoral states reveals political, economic and military ties remain the most important. Intergovernmental links are mainly concerned with these types of cooperation, with cultural ties remaining largely *ad hoc*. The end of the east-west confrontation has forced all regional leaders, including those in the Mediterranean, to reassess their sources of external support. The change from a bipolar to a more unipolar and multipolar international system has created a new strategic environment for external actors in different regions of the world.

External assistance has become somewhat more effective in influencing regional dynamics. In the cut-throat world of globalization only those regional actors who are deemed politically stable and economically productive are being extended lines of credit that are required to make a difference to their overall international position. The southern countries of the Mediterranean continue to attract less external capital than those of East Asia and even less than some others in Latin America. This is due to a number of reasons that include political uncertainty, administrative obstruction, a comparatively unskilled labour force and an inadequate infrastructure.\textsuperscript{12}

The disappearance of the Soviet Union has left the United States as the predominant external military actor in the Mediterranean, and has allowed it to consolidate its position in the basin. The presence of
a single superpower could help moderate local crises, as Washington mutes rivalries by cutting off supplies to mavericks in the area. As an economic hegemon in the Mediterranean, the EU could assist the United States in this sector by complementing American military power with economic support. But such coordination will not be easy to achieve given the more competitive nature of transatlantic relations in the post-Cold War era.

At a bilateral level the United States also remains the dominant great power in the Mediterranean. America is the leading external actor in the region with strong political, economic and military ties to its Southern European allies in NATO. It also has comprehensive agreements with Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, Malta, Tunisia and Morocco. The sheer economic and defensive power that the United States possesses ensures that it will continue to attract the attention of Mediterranean countries in forthcoming decades.

While contemporary international relations has seen the United States become more concerned with regional relations in the eastern sector of the Mediterranean basin, EU countries have focused a great deal of their attention on events in the western sector of the basin. As an external great power the United States can act more independently in the Mediterranean than European great powers bordering the Mediterranean, such as France which is more vulnerable to retaliation from action in the Maghreb given its geographical proximity and large Maghrebi emigrant community. In any case, although it is the leading intrusive power in the world, the fact remains that while the United States continues to influence regional dynamics, it cannot dictate patterns of relations within international regions, not even in the Mediterranean.

The state of flux that the international system has been in since the end of the Cold War has led all actors in the international system, including great powers, to be much more flexible in their foreign policy endeavours than during the period 1945–89. Such flexibility is another factor regarded by many theorists as a hallmark of effective great power concerts.13 In situations where the direct
interests of the extra-regional states are concerned they will react decisively as demonstrated by the United States in the Gulf War of 1990–91, intervention in FR Yugoslavia 1999, and again in the war against Iraq in 2003 and in the Libya conflict of 2011.

Continued domestic and regional instability continues to impede Mediterranean littoral states from attaining far reaching agreements with great powers. Future external relations in the Mediterranean area will depend less on the activity of the non-regional powers and more on how littoral states consolidate their power and perceive their geo-strategic interests. For example, arms flows to the eastern and southern sectors of the Mediterranean continue at a steady pace due to the lack of progress registered in the Arab-Israeli peace process and other regional peace initiatives such as that concerning the Western Sahara (UN initiative led by former US Secretary of State, James Baker – Baker Plan 2000, Manhasset negotiations 2007-8). Regional powers in different Middle Eastern sub regions are even more determined than before to shore up their defences now that patron support can no longer be taken for granted.

In the post-Cold War international system the United States remains unchallenged as the only superpower. Throughout the 1990s the United States spent an average of $280 billion annually on defence. An important outcome of the US National Security Strategy of September 2002 is that defence spending increased to more than $400 billion a year or 3 per cent of American GDP. Even if Americans decide to dedicate 4 per cent of their GDP – a defence budget in excess of $500 billion annually – it would still represent a smaller proportion of national wealth than Americans spent throughout the Cold War. Even Paul Kennedy who invented the term ‘imperial overstretch’ in the late 1980s, when the United States was spending around 7 per cent of its GDP on defence, believes the United States can sustain its current military spending levels and its current global dominance far into the future.14

The Bush administration’s new National Security Strategy was formulated in response to the terror attacks of September 11th 2001.
President Obama and President Trump have largely left American military spending at this same level. Aside from a few references to the concept of ‘pre-emption’ which is not completely a new concept in any case, the strategy essentially restates the goals of American foreign policy that have been in place since the end of the Second World War. The Bush strategy to continue promoting democracy echoes the goals of presidencies such as Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. The declaration to guarantee America’s pre-eminent military position and to fend off challenges from other powers is the foundation stone upon which American foreign policy has been built over the last half century.

In any case, the absolute superiority of the United States air, naval and military power at this stage of the twenty first century dictates that Washington will continue to control the international sea-lines of communication across the Mediterranean. American strategic interests in the Mediterranean area will largely focus on the eastern sector of the basin, namely the Middle East region in general and the Mashreq and Persian Gulf sub regions in particular. This part of the world is crucial to stabilizing the adjacent region of Central Asia, guaranteeing the security of Israel and also access to oil resources throughout this century.

Reconstruction of Iraq, navigating complex relations with Iran and a permanent settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remain high on the American foreign policy agenda throughout the first half of the twenty-first century. Success in Iraq is a crucial piece in the post-September 11th puzzle as it will provide the United States with a listening post and launching pad in the heart of the Middle East. A resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will also deliver geopolitical dividends and assist in repairing the perceptual rift that exists between the United States and a large segment of the Arab world.

Although some have referred to an Asian pivot being at the heart of future American foreign policy it is clear that the Mediterranean remains a top priority in American foreign policy planning.
Upgrading of the Fifth and Sixth Fleets operating in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, respectively, will continue to take place as will the search for new strategic allies and the strengthening of old ones in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Mastery of the Mediterranean will allow the United States to project its power in proximate regions on short notice and also deter any potential aggressors that might seek to take advantage were a Mediterranean power vacuum allowed to develop.

The role of international organizations: the case of NATO

When examining the role that international organizations play in regional relations it is essential to focus on the political interests and coalitions that lie behind the strategic objectives of such international organizations.

Freedom of navigation has been a principal concern for all external actors who have an interest in the Mediterranean. Historically, the sea has been the chief medium for cultural and economic exchanges and for political and military ventures. When the basin was controlled by Mediterranean states they based their strategic considerations on the nature of their physical position and the paramount position of the Mediterranean in the international political economy.

The pattern of relations between internal and external actors in the Mediterranean changed significantly in the twentieth century once the process of decolonization became irreversible. By the mid-1950s a number of international organizations had already expressed anti-colonial tendencies. In 1918 the Covenant of the League of Nations stressed the right to self-determination and in 1945 the Charter of the United Nations reiterated this principle. Both contributed to establishing an international consensus that was antagonistic to the possession of colonial territories.

By the 1960s, Third World nationalism had gained in prominence. The two superpowers had little choice but to accommodate a third
force in international affairs once the non-aligned conference was held in Bandung in 1955. Given the intersection of the East-West and the north-south divisions in the Mediterranean it perhaps comes as little surprise that two of the founding fathers of non-alignment, Tito and Nasser, came from two countries in the Mediterranean area.15

The international system experienced a sea change in structural design at the end of the Cold War as power alignments shifted. The lifting of superpower overlay has allowed for a resurgence of regional dynamics in all parts of the world including the Mediterranean. Fears that the United States would become a global hegemonic power have surfaced from time to time throughout the 1990s and have been rekindled by the proactive foreign policy stance that Washington has adopted since September 11th 2001.

The scenario of a ‘back to the future’ course of events emerging, with great power patron-client relationships of the past resurfacing, has also not appeared. The emergence of a ‘new' hegemonic actor on the international scene also remains an illusion. Yet it is clear that international organizations such as the EU and NATO are playing a more active role in regional politics. The relegation of superpower politics to the history books has coincided with an increase in multilateral intergovernmental and transnational patterns of interaction.

The end of the Cold War has ushered in a period where the realm of external actors’ ability to influence international regional relations has changed. Bilateral types of intrusive intervention are often being superseded by multilateral types of intervention as international organizations become more active in regional affairs. This is evident when one compares the nature of intrusive action during the Cold War in the Mediterranean with that of the last two decades. The disappearance of the Soviet Union and the reluctance of the United States to act unilaterally on several occasions throughout the 1990s and more recently have allowed international organizations such as the EU and NATO to play a much more active part in the Mediterranean theatre of operations.
A number of other indicators also appear to support this thesis. First, the multifaceted security challenges that great powers perceive as emanating from this area are convincing them that international organizations are better equipped to contend with such risks. Second, the high cost of addressing security challenges favours a collective intrusive response that shares economic burdens.

Third, the Mediterranean remains a geo-strategic area of importance, both as an international waterway and because of its energy producing and transporting capacity. It is therefore in the interest of all international actors that sea-lines of communication in the Mediterranean remain open. A multilateral approach to such security challenges is less of a political risk than unilateral action would be.

While the United States remains the predominant military actor in the Mediterranean basin, the EU is the leading economic player in the basin through its numerous Euro-Mediterranean policy initiatives including the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean. This development is conducive to an increase of international organization involvement in the area. Several other international organizations also operate in the Mediterranean area. These include the United Nations (UN), the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Arab League which includes the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Since the end of the Cold War NATO has gone through several phases of soul-searching in an attempt to identify what new roles it can play in the post-Cold War security arena. In the Mediterranean the Atlantic Alliance has sought to extend its multilateral approach in two ways: by establishing a confidence building network with non-member Mediterranean states\(^1\) through its Mediterranean dialogue

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\(^1\) NATO Mediterranean member states are all EU Mediterranean member states (except Malta and Cyprus) and also Albania and Montenegro and Turkey.
programme and by fostering a politico-security culture similar to that which exists in Europe.

Traditionally, NATO has always included the Mediterranean dimension in its forecasting. Italy was among the 12 original signatories of the Treaty. After 1949, the Alliance reaffirmed its commitment to the Mediterranean as three of the four new members of the Alliance were from Southern Europe. The significance attached to the Mediterranean and its flanking areas is further highlighted by the fact that two-thirds of the 15 Alliance-relevant regional conflicts have occurred in this area since 1956.16

NATO's approach to the Mediterranean has undergone considerable evolution since 1949. Three specific innovations took place during the Cold War which retain their significance today:

- A special group for consultations on the Mediterranean was set up in 1967 in an application of Article IV of the Washington Treaty. This consultative process promotes consensual views among Alliance members.
- In 1975 the Alliance endorsed the idea of a Mediterranean basket within the framework of the OSCE. This step is one of the first to recognize the importance of an institutional dimension to trans-Mediterranean affairs.
- In 1982 the Alliance confirmed that it was legitimate for member states to respond unilaterally to requests from third parties for assistance against aggression and that such actions would be compensated for by other NATO assets. As a result, redeployments from the Mediterranean were often replaced by those from other member states.

Throughout the Cold War both the Canadians and the Americans cooperated with their European allies to ensure strategic depth and deterrence in the geographically and geopolitically varied parameters of the Mediterranean. As a result NATO succeeded in ensuring strategic cohesion across Southern Europe and provided a
security insurance that was respected. It also advanced stability and political rapprochement between countries traditionally at odds with one another and helped maintain the defence modernization of Southern European members.

In the post-Cold War world NATO has sought to transform its posture and approach in the Mediterranean. The first main change was a conceptual one. At the 1989 Anniversary Summit and in the Strategic Concept of 1991 in Rome, the Alliance acknowledged the multifaceted security challenges confronting it. In addition to traditional threats, NATO also highlighted numerous other problems such as proliferation of WMD, terrorism, economic disparities, environmental degradation and mass migration. NATO also accepted to participate in the emerging interlocking institutional arrangement in which different security institutions such as the OSCE, the EU, the UN and NATO all contributed to the resolution of conflicts.

NATO's institutional efforts to further relations with its northern and eastern neighbours through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and Partnership for Peace (PfP) programmes have resulted in membership invitations to the vast majority of states in this catchment area. In contrast, NATO’s policy towards the south has, to date, been restricted to a dialogue with a selected number of countries in the Mediterranean. Details of the Alliance’s ‘southern strategy’ were spelled out by NATO officials in February 1995. Five countries in the Maghreb and the Mashreq, namely Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Egypt and Israel, were selected as the first countries to join this process of enhanced communication. Algeria and Jordan subsequently became members of the NATO-Mediterranean dialogue bringing the total to seven Mediterranean countries participating in the NATO programme towards the Mediterranean.

The second change that has taken place relates to NATO’s defence reorganization. The Alliance has improved its operational mobility and flexibility. An emphasis was also put on increasing multinational
operations. This experience equipped the Alliance to address the spectrum of security challenges in the Mediterranean.

NATO’s third shift is linked to the practical experience that the Alliance has had in recent years in the Mediterranean. A number of particular episodes stand out. NATO’s contribution to the 1991 Persian Gulf War was paradoxical in nature. Although not directly involved in the war itself, NATO played a decisive role in the successful military prosecution of the war. Consultations, information-sharing and policy concentration conducted through NATO channels helped to galvanize international support for UN resolutions against Iraq.

NATO’s deployment of its mobile air force to Turkey not only bolstered the latter’s defences but also enhanced intelligence collecting throughout the Mediterranean. The Alliance also supplied essential logistical and communications support to the 12 nations who actually had forces on the ground during the war.\(^{18}\) The 1991 Gulf War advanced the thesis that post-Cold War crises could be dealt with successfully if the indispensable importance of harmonizing the Washington treaty with the UN Charter was recognized.

This thesis was underlined by NATO’s role in another episode it had to confront, the Balkan crisis. The lack of a concerted North American and European perspective on the military and political demands associated with the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is one reason that UN resolutions in the area have not been fully enforced. In an effort to contain and end the war in the Balkans, NATO adopted a series of policies that included participating in monitoring operations in the Adriatic alongside EU under UN resolutions. NATO also oversaw UN authorized no-fly zones in Bosnia increasing collaboration between the EU, UN and NATO and cooperation with Hungary and Albania. In the post-conflict phase NATO contributed directly to stability through its IFOR and SFOR missions.
NATO also continues to indirectly influence the evolution of the Middle East peace process. Although not directly involved in the regional dynamics of the Middle East, NATO is a decisive third party that acts as a buttress to the functional EU economic role and American military role in this region. This fact was clearly demonstrated in the 1990–91 Gulf War when NATO refuelling bases and other logistical support greatly accelerated the Desert Shield build-up and the Desert Storm campaign.¹⁹

NATO’s involvement in the Gulf War, its participation in the Balkan conflict and Afghanistan and constant references to a NATO peace-keeping force in the aftermath of a Middle East peaceful settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, make it highly likely that this international organization will be an active player in future crisis situations across the Mediterranean.

This more active scenario presents both risks and opportunities for countries in the basin. An increase in the emergence of failed states, as was the case in Algeria in the mid-1990s, and as witnessed through NATO’s involvement in Libya in 2011 in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 could easily prompt a rapid reaction NATO response to safeguard expatriates and protect vital petrochemical installations. Conversely, countries in the Mediterranean can now take advantage of NATO’s renewed interest in the area by opening wide-ranging security discussions with the Alliance. Such a process of dialogue could help dispel some of the misperceptions that exist on both sides of the Mediterranean.

In recent years a specific effort has been made to improve the level of coordination between NATO’s Mediterranean policy and the EU’s common foreign and security policy. This process of cooperation is being somewhat facilitated by the European Union’s permanent structured cooperation mechanism (PESCO). NATO officials regularly consult with their EU counterparts to explain their respective strategic objectives towards the Mediterranean. But policy coordination remains at a somewhat embryonic stage and there is no indication that a policy harmonization process between NATO and the EU in the Mediterranean is on the cards.²⁰
NATO’s initial decision in the post-Cold War era not to set up a new security policy arm in the Mediterranean area such as a ‘NACC-South’ resulted in the NATO-Mediterranean Partnership emerging as the main policy mechanism.21 A number of indicators support the creation of such a forum:

- NATO’s advanced command and control structure could serve as a vehicle for promoting a security dialogue with non-member NATO countries;

- the lessons learned through the outreach programmes such as Partnership for Peace with Central and Eastern Europe are applicable in the South as the security challenges in this region are also related to transitory post-Cold War realities;

- NATO’s links with Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia through NACC-like mechanisms provide a forum through which ties between these regions and the Mediterranean could be developed;

- by extending its diplomatic and military machinery southwards, NATO, together with other European organizations such as the EU, OSCE and Council of Europe, could ensure their participation in any future trans-Mediterranean security arrangement, such as the proposal of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). 22

The current objective of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) continues to be to contribute to regional security and stability, achieve better mutual understanding and dispel any misconceptions about NATO among Mediterranean countries. Since its establishment in 1995 the MD has been gradually strengthened in line with its progressive character. In particular, at their Summit in July 1997 NATO Heads of State and Government decided to establish the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG) operating under the authority of the North Atlantic Council.23
Cooperation with dialogue partners has continued to be strengthened in a number of areas including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, crisis management, and defence reform and military-to-military cooperation. An enhanced NATO-Mediterranean co-operative security framework would assist in achieving a more secure Euro-Mediterranean area.

The post-Cold War period is proving to be a continuous test to the raison d’être of NATO as the dividing lines of the past have either faded or disappeared completely. While the Alliance has found common ground in the fight against international terrorism this period of rapid flux presents NATO with an identity crisis which is exacerbated when seen through the lens of such a diverse area as the Mediterranean.

Looking ahead NATO’s Mediterranean policy can offer a life-line to transatlantic relations as an opportunity to forge new links with non-member Mediterranean countries. Although the financial and political costs of developing an active alliance network across the waterway will be high, the costs of failing to establish such a system could be higher in the long term, should instability from the Mediterranean spread towards the north.

NATO’s successful Cold War track record and its ability to re-shape its security agenda in the past two decades makes it one of the most prominent security institutions functioning today. As transatlantic relations have evolved and at times become more strained, the transatlantic commitment to NATO has not yet wavered. Talk of a NATO collapse has proved premature. NATO Secretary General Norwegian Jens Stoltenberg when delivering a historic speech to a joint session of US Congress to commemorate the 70th anniversary of NATO’s founding treaty signed in Washington DC in 1949, credited American president Donald Trump for persuading other NATO members to increase their defense spending up to the agreed spending level as stipulated in 2014 Wales Defense Investment Pledge.
Additional way to preserve the cohesiveness of the Alliance is to identify common security ground in the new security environment that has emerged. The Mediterranean and by extension, the Middle East, offer the Alliance such an opportunity.

The fact that Europe has developed a multi-level international society, in which international organizations such as the EU, NATO and the OSCE can interact with states and sub-national institutions, puts Europe in a strong position to approach security issues in the Mediterranean. Given the lack of unity in the security perceptions of the countries in the Mediterranean and those powers with an interest in the area, it is unrealistic to assume that a single international organization can address the multitude of security challenges that are present in the Mediterranean. A more realistic alternative is one in which a single international organization, such as the EU, is assisted by other transatlantic organisations such as NATO and the OSCE, who have the resources and an interest in the international relations of the Mediterranean.

American participation in NATO often makes this organization appear more like a vehicle of superpower interests than one concerned with addressing Mediterranean concerns. Absent the creation of a trans-Mediterranean international forum, that would certainly be perceived as much more representative of Mediterranean regional interests, a transatlantic strategic approach would appear the most feasible platform upon which more intensive cooperative patterns of relations throughout the Mediterranean could be promoted.

In the decade ahead, the strategic goal of international organizations operating in the Mediterranean must be to introduce measures that reduce the regional dynamics of fragmentation that continue to dominate Middle Eastern relations and could result in the emergence of a north-south arc of instability across the Mediterranean.
Endnotes


18 Snyder, op. cit., 1993, pp. 102–19.

19 Snyder, ibid., pp. 109–10.


Authors

Prof. Stephen Calleya

Professor Stephen C. Calleya is Director and International Relations Professor at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies at the University of Malta. Professor Calleya is also advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malta with the status of Ambassador. Between 1996 and 2012 Prof. Calleya has been the Project Manager of the Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training Seminars in Malta. Most recently in September 2017 Prof. Calleya addressed the Presidents of the Arraiolos Group in Malta on the theme of ‘Managing Security Challenges in the Mediterranean’.


Amb. (ret) Dr. Nassif Hitti

Dr. Hitti holds a PhD in international relations. He is currently the Director of the Higher Institute of Political and Administrative Sciences at the Holy Spirit University, Kaslik, Lebanon. He was the
League of Arab States Ambassador to France, Italy, the Holy See and the UNESCO. He also served as Diplomatic Advisor in the nineties to the Secretary General of the League of Arab States. He is the author of two books and many articles on the Middle East and on international affairs.

Mr. Josef Janning

Josef Janning is a senior policy fellow and head of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations. His topics of focus include European integration, EU reform, European and German foreign and security policy, global governance and transatlantic relations.

Janning joined the European Council on Foreign Relations in April 2014 as senior policy fellow in the Berlin office. From 2013 to 2014 he was a Mercator Fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations. Prior to that he served as Director of Studies at the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels. Between 2001 and 2010, Janning led the international policy work as Senior Director of the Bertelsmann Foundation, a major private German foundation. Earlier positions in his career include Deputy Director of the Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) at Munich University from 1995-2007. Previously, he has held teaching positions at the University of Mainz, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a guest professorship at Renmin University of Beijing. He has worked with leading think tanks in Europe, the US and Asia, and engaged in and led various international study groups, high-level groups and commissions. Janning has published widely on European affairs, International Relations, EU foreign and security policy, German foreign and Europe policy as well as global affairs. On these issues he is also a frequent commentator with German and international media.
Dr. Antonio Missiroli

Dr. Antonio Missiroli is the Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges. Prior to joining NATO, Dr. Antonio Missiroli was the Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris (2012-17). Previously, he was Adviser at the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) of the European Commission (2010-2012); Director of Studies at the European Policy Centre in Brussels (2005-2010), and Senior Research Fellow at the W/EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris (1998-2005). He was also Head of European Studies at CeSPI in Rome (1994-97) and a Visiting Fellow at St Antony’s College, Oxford (1996-97).

As well as being a professional journalist, he has also taught at Bath and Trento as well as Boston University, SAIS/Johns Hopkins, at the College of Europe (Bruges) and Sciences Po (Paris). Dr. Missiroli holds a PhD degree in Contemporary History from the Scuola Normale Superiore (Pisa) and a Master’s degree in International Public Policy from SAIS/Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Juliette R. Rouge Shedd

Dr. Rouge Shedd is currently the Associate Dean for Administration at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University and teaches both introductory courses and courses on terrorism, extremism, global conflicts, and ideologies. She holds a Ph.D. and M.Sc. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University and a BA in Political Science and Psychology from George Washington University. Her research includes work on the relationship of media to conflict, specifically focused on media coverage of terrorism and the role of women in political violence. She has shepherded S-CAR’s efforts to increase distance education
and overseen a wide range of innovations in experiential and service learning. She served as the academic project manager for the development of the school's Point of View International Retreat and Research Center.

**Dr. Monika Wohlfeld**

Dr. Monika Wohlfeld holds the German Chair in Peace and Conflict Prevention, established at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), University of Malta by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. MEDAC is a regional higher education institution.

Previously she was the Deputy Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), responsible for the Organization’s field operations. She served as Head of External Co-operation of the OSCE and, prior to that, as Senior Diplomatic Adviser to the OSCE Secretary General. She has been a Senior Research Fellow at the Western European Union (now European Union) Institute for Security Studies in Paris, and Researcher at the War Studies Department at King’s College London. She holds a PhD in War Studies from King’s College London. Dr. Monika Wohlfeld has published widely on matters related to European security, European institutions, regional co-operation, conflict prevention and crisis management.
Postgraduate Seminar, 30th November 2018
(financed by the German Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs)
Radisson Blu Hotel, St. Julian’s, Malta

Transatlantic Relations and the Mediterranean

09:00-10:15  Welcome
Prof. Stephen Calleya, Director, MEDAC
Amb. Walter Haßmann, German Ambassador to Malta

Taking stock and the way forward
Chair: Dr. Monika Wohlfeld, German Chair for Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention, MEDAC
Mr. Josef Janning, Head of the European Council on Foreign Relations Berlin Office, Berlin

10:15-10:45  Group Photo and Coffee break

10:45-11:45 The security dimension and emerging security challenges in the Mediterranean
Chair: Mr. Tom Mc Grath, former EU European External Action Service official, Brussels
Dr. Antonio Missiroli, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, Brussels
11:45-12:45  *Regional relations in the Middle East*
Chair: **Dr. Derek Lutterbeck**, Deputy Director, MEDAC
**Amb. Nassif Hitti**, former Head of the Arab League Delegation to France, Permanent Observer of the Arab League to UNESCO, Paris

12:45-13:30  Buffet Lunch

13:30-14:30  *The American Perspective*
Chair: **Dr. Omar Grech**, Director, Centre for the Study and Practice of Conflict Resolution, Malta and Lecturer of International Law, MEDAC
**Dr. Juliette R. Rouge Shedd**, Associate Dean, The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SCAR), George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia

14:30-15:30  Working Groups

15:30–16:00  *Reports from Working Groups* (WG1: **Ms Roba Al Jamal**, WG2: **Mr Mohamed Wael Khammassi**, WG3: **Mr Luke Mintoff**, WG4: **Ms Hanan Abdelall**)
Chair: **Prof. Stephen Callely**, Director, MEDAC
Seminar participants.
Mr. Josef Janning, ECFR Berlin, addressing the seminar. On the left, Prof. Calleya, Director MEDAC; on the right Dr. Monika Wohlfeld, Holder of the German Chair for Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention, MEDAC.
Amb (ret.) Nassif Hitti, former Head of the Arab League Delegation to France and Permanent Observer of the Arab League to UNESCO during his presentation. On the left, Dr. Wohlfeld, MEDAC; on the right, Dr. Derek Lutterbeck, Deputy Director and Holder of the Swiss Chair, MEDAC.
Dr. Omar Grech, Director, Centre for the Study and Practice of Conflict Resolution, Malta introducing Dr. Juliette R. Rouge Shedd, Associate Dean, The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SCAR), George Mason University. On the left, Dr. Wohlfeld, MEDAC.

Dr. Rouge Shedd addressing the seminar participants.
MEDAC postgraduate students at the seminar.
Mr. Josef Janning and Dr. Monika Wohlfeld, MEDAC, with MEDAC students during the working group session.

Dr. Antonio Missiroli, NATO and Mr. Tom Mc Grath, former EU European External Action Service official with students during the working group session.
Prof. Calleya, MEDAC Director, and Amb. Hitti with students during the working group session.

Dr. Rouge Shedd, SCAR, and Dr. Grech with students during the working group session.
MEDAC postgraduate students and seminar working group rapporteurs (R to L) Ms. Roba Al Jamal, Mr. Mohamed Wael Khammassi, Mr. Luke Mintoff and Ms. Hanan Abdelall with Prof. Stephen Calleya (middle), Director, MEDAC.
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The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) is an institution of higher learning at the University of Malta offering advanced degrees in diplomacy and conflict resolution with a focus on Mediterranean issues.

MEDAC was established in 1990 pursuant to an agreement between the governments of Malta and Switzerland. The Academy is currently co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta. The Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (HEID) was among MEDAC’s first foreign partners. More recently in 2009, MEDAC concluded an agreement with the German Federal Foreign Office and established a German Chair in Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention.

In academic year 2019/2020 MEDAC will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Since its inception, MEDAC has acquired a solid reputation both as an academic institution and as a practical training platform. We are fortunate to count over 800 alumni from 59 different countries who have completed successfully the post-graduate courses offered by the Academy. The EU’s enlargement towards the Mediterranean, that included Malta in 2004, and the recent transformation of the political landscape throughout the Arab World have resulted in an ever increasing demand for MEDAC’s programme of studies.

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Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, MALTA
Tel: (+356) 2340 2821, Fax: (+356) 2148 3091
e-mail: medac@um.edu.mt
www.um.edu.mt/medac
www.facebook.com/uom.medac
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