

Security and Strategy  
in the Eastern  
Mediterranean



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**by Dr. Ian O. Lesser**

Public Policy Scholar

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**Dr. Ian O. Lesser**

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Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)

49, Vas. Sofias Ave

106 76 Athens, Greece

Tel: +30210 7257110 fax: +302 10 7257114

e-mail: [eliamep@eliamep.gr](mailto:eliamep@eliamep.gr) url: <http://www.eliamep.gr>

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## **About the author**

Ian Lesser was an Onassis Foundation Visiting Fellow at ELIAMEP from December 2004 to May 2005.

Dr. Lesser is President of Mediterranean Advisors, LLC. He is also a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, where he leads a project on the future of U.S.-Turkish relations, and an Adjunct Staff-Member at the RAND Corporation. From October 2005 through March 2006, he is a Visiting Fellow at the Luso-American Foundation in Lisbon.

Prior to establishing Mediterranean Advisors, Dr. Lesser was Vice President and Director of Studies at the Pacific Council on International Policy (the western partner of the Council on Foreign Relations). He came to the Pacific Council from RAND, where he spent over ten years as a senior staff member specializing in strategic studies and Mediterranean security. From 1994-1995, he was a member of the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State, responsible for

Turkey, Southern Europe, North Africa, and the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process.

## **A Region at the Center of Strategic Concerns?**

A decade ago, Mediterranean security was a peripheral concern for strategists and policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic. Today, Mediterranean issues are central to strategic debates, not only in Europe, where security concerns emanating from the south have had a prominent place on policy agendas for some time, but also in Washington. The post September 11<sup>th</sup> emphasis on counter-terrorism, together with the war in Iraq, has accelerated the shift of attention from European to Middle Eastern security. As a result, there is now a clear convergence of transatlantic attention – if not necessarily strategy – toward the Mediterranean and its hinterlands, from the Maghreb to the Black Sea and the Gulf.

The eastern Mediterranean has a special place in this new environment. In the early 1990s, with the opening of the crisis in Algeria, developments in North Africa and their potential effects on Europe were at the forefront in driving attention to the Mediterranean and north-south initiatives, including the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona Process) and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. A decade on, the center of gravity in Mediterranean geopolitics has shifted eastward. The most active and consequential partners for north-south security dialogue are to be found in the central and eastern Mediterranean. Many, if by no means all, of the security problems in the region are concentrated in the Levant and the Gulf, with actual and potential spillovers to the Mediterranean and European environment. The sources of insecurity in the eastern Mediterranean are diverse. They include a series of unresolved regional and inter-state conflicts, and a number of prominent functional security problems of a "hard" and "soft" nature – terrorism and political violence, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized and disorganized crime,

uncontrolled migration, environmental and health risks, energy security, and more diffuse, perceived risks to identity.

Few if any of these issues are new in the strict sense. They have been part of the Mediterranean security environment for some time.<sup>1</sup> So what is new? The short answer is that the context for addressing all of these concerns has changed substantially in recent years, and continues to evolve rapidly, giving established issues – the Arab-Israeli conflict is a key example – new meaning, and new implications for European and transatlantic security. First, the movement of people and the rise of trans-regional risks such as terrorism are no longer theoretical challenges in a Mediterranean setting. The post September 11<sup>th</sup>, post-March 11<sup>th</sup> environment makes this very clear. The ability of developments around the southern Mediterranean to affect, directly and indirectly, the security of traditionally prosperous and secure societies in the north has increased substantially. Second, the eastern Mediterranean and its hinterland are now places of change rather than stasis, and the center of Western efforts to transform societies and politics across what is now fashionably termed the "broader Middle East." Third, the problems of the eastern Mediterranean are no longer peripheral in transatlantic terms, but the regional and transatlantic debates over strategy toward the area are more contentious than ever, a reflection of philosophical and stylistic differences, and differing instruments and means.

In short, Mediterranean geopolitics has become central in security terms at a moment of pronounced flux in outlook and policy on both sides of the Atlantic. The U.S. has adopted a more forward-leaning but still uncertain strategy toward the

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<sup>1</sup> For an extremely comprehensive overview of security issues, including environmental security in the Mediterranean, see Hans Gunter Brauch et al, eds., *Security and Environment in the Mediterranean* (Berlin: Springer, 2002).

broader Middle East, an initiative reflected in some but hardly all aspects of the EU's own strategy toward the Mediterranean and the wider European neighborhood.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which American and European approaches to the region will converge or diverge over the coming years is a critical, open question shaping the future of the eastern Mediterranean.

This report assesses security and strategy in the eastern Mediterranean in a medium to longer-term time frame, looking toward likely developments over the next decade. It discusses recent and prospective changes on the regional scene, emerging functional issues, and the evolving place of the eastern Mediterranean in European and American strategies. The final section offers overall observations and transatlantic policy implications.

### **Conflict and Uncertainty in Iraq**

The Iraq war and its aftermath have affected the strategic environment in profound ways, with special implications for the eastern Mediterranean. The military containment of Iraq is, for the moment at least, no longer a factor. But the unresolved security and political situation in the country is a leading element in the calculus of neighboring states, not least Turkey and Iran. If the political violence in Iraq continues unabated, there is a risk that Iraq will become a standing center for extremism, with possible spillovers to adjacent regions. Even if central rule in Iraq is consolidated under the new regime and with a new constitution, continued high levels of violence may impede the reconstruction and development of the country. There are already some signs that the Iraqi insurgency is acquiring characteristics reminiscent of the violence in Algeria in

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<sup>2</sup> See Barcelona Plus: Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States (Lisbon: EuroMeSCo, April 2005).

the mid-1990s, with the rise of private vendettas, economic terrorism, and attacks fueled by rage rather than a coherent political agenda.

Should Iraq evolve along these lines, it is likely that some form of international presence, beyond and perhaps in place of the American deployment, will eventually be necessary. Turkey will have an obvious stake in these arrangements, but so will Syria and Iran. Countries in southern Europe, including Greece and Italy, may face on-going requests to support these operations, by providing bases, over-flight rights, and personnel for peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Waning American public support for operations in Iraq also points to a reduced American presence, perhaps sooner rather than later, with a corresponding need for new multinational security arrangements inside the country.<sup>3</sup>

Conditions of protracted instability in Iraq may also fuel demands for Kurdish separatism, as Kurds seek to consolidate their relative stability and prosperity in northern Iraq. The emergence of an independent Kurdish state remains a possible, if still somewhat unlikely development. It will nonetheless remain a leading concern for Turkey, where the effect on the country's Kurdish community, resurgent PKK violence, and possible claims on Turkish territory, are highly charged questions. Short of independence, a more coherent and autonomous Kurdish area in the north may actually form a natural sphere of influence for Ankara, given the importance of Turkey to northern Iraq in economic and security terms. Turkish analysts are beginning to think through the longer-term implications of alternative Kurdish futures in Iraq. But the issue remains highly sensitive across the political spectrum, and a

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<sup>3</sup> For a European policy perspective, see Walter Posch, ed., "Looking Into Iraq", *Challot Paper* No. 79 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, July 2005).

flashpoint for nationalist discourse. A Turkish intervention in northern Iraq, to protect the interests of the Turkmen community in Kirkuk, or for other reasons, remains a possibility. Action of this kind would prove highly distracting to Turkey, and could complicate or halt Ankara's EU accession negotiations over the next decade, against a background of rising Turkish nationalism and sovereignty concerns. A shift of priorities of this kind – and a re-nationalization of Turkish policy – would be felt across a wide area, leading to a recalibration of policies in the Aegean, in Syrian-Turkish relations, and above all, in US-Turkish relations.

Apart from the effect on Kurdish nationalism, and possible spillovers of political violence in the immediate region, the Iraq experience has had a range of consequences for the eastern Mediterranean security environment. First, the war and its aftermath have fundamentally changed the European and Middle Eastern debates about American power and purpose. Countries around the region with longstanding bilateral relationships with Washington have come under pressure from public opinion, which has been strongly opposed to the war. This has been the case across southern Europe, including Greece, where governments have generally been quietly supportive of American logistical requirements for Iraq, while keeping an arms length approach to U.S. Iraq policy per se. This situation is unlikely to change in the absence of a new multilateral approach to security and reconstruction in Iraq. Indeed, such an approach is possible, certainly in the medium-term, as Washington seeks an exit from Iraq; an exit that will probably require some form of UN mandate for international involvement. Italy, Greece, Turkey and key Arab states may well be called upon to provide support for Iraq operations under a UN or other multilateral rubric.

Turkish-American relations have been particularly affected by the Iraq experience. Acceptance by the Turkish parliament of the proposed deployment of up to 60,000 American troops through Turkey to northern Iraq would have been an unprecedented development, flying in the face of long-established patterns of Turkish nationalism and sovereignty-consciousness. Given this, it is perhaps surprising that the proposal was very nearly approved. In the event, the ambivalence of Turkish policy elites, including the military, and the outright opposition of many sectors to the use of force in Iraq probably tipped the balance in favor of a "no." At base, the American failure to secure a "yes" from Turkey reflected the widespread perception that Turkish interests, especially vis-à-vis the Kurds in northern Iraq, were not being taken seriously. At the same time, Turkish public opinion, strongly opposed to war in Iraq, was a factor difficult to ignore, especially for an avowedly populist AKP government. The lesson for Washington, and for Turkey's partners in Europe and the region, is that Turkey is now a place where public opinion counts, even on foreign and security policy issues.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, Turkey is now solidly in the European mainstream.

On the American side, the negotiations with Turkey in the run-up to the war made clear that Turkish-U.S. relations could no longer proceed on auto-pilot. Turkish cooperation in regional contingencies could not be taken for granted (a reality that should have been evident from over a decade of experience in the containment of Iraq). Turkish public, and even elite suspicions regarding American regional intentions, always substantial, have been strongly reinforced. There is now a need, acknowledged on all sides, to reassess and reinvigorate a bilateral relationship badly in need of post-Cold War renewal.

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<sup>4</sup> See the recent analysis of public opinion trends, including Turkey, in *Transatlantic Trends 2005* (Washington: German Marshall Fund of the U.S. et al, September 7, 2005).

Whether this can be done, in light of developments in Turkish-EU relations and policy disagreements in the Gulf and elsewhere, is one of the key open questions affecting the strategic environment in the eastern Mediterranean – and affecting the interests of actors such as Greece, Armenia, Russia and Iran, whose policies are influenced by Turkish behavior.

Second, the Iraq experience has shown that the broader Middle East, including the Levant and the southeastern Mediterranean, is a place where the geopolitical status quo is not immutable. Regimes that have been fixtures on the international scene for decades have been overthrown (Iraq), compelled to change course (Libya, Syria), or placed under internal and external pressure (virtually all). Debate rages about the wisdom of “shaking things up,” but it is clear that things have been shaken up across the region, in political and security terms. Regional actors on both sides of the Mediterranean must now plan for a more dynamic environment in which some longstanding assumptions may be challenged.<sup>5</sup>

In more tangible military and logistical terms, the Iraq experience may also be significant. With the operations in Afghanistan, it has led to a substantial re-orientation of American military presence and strategy southward, accelerating movement away from a legacy Cold War posture in the center of Europe. Even if the large-scale American military presence in Iraq is drawn down, planning and infrastructure for rapid power projection on the southern periphery of Europe will persist, and will most likely be reinforced. To maintain a reasonably predictable environment for access and cooperation oriented toward the south, Washington will find itself in more active

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<sup>5</sup> For a wide-ranging treatment of political, economic and security dynamics across the Middle East, see Nora Bensahel and Daniel Byman, eds., *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability and Political Change* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2004).

engagement with partners and potential partners in the Balkans, the Levant, the Gulf and around the Black Sea (and further afield, in North Africa and South and Central Asia). Traditional NATO partners, including Greece, may actually find themselves under lesser, or different pressure in the context of future crises – as rear areas for logistical support, rather than bases for military strikes. At the same time, the ability to move forces rapidly from the Mediterranean basin to the Gulf and the Indian Ocean will be important to strategic planning, as it has been since the first Iraq war (a requirement with Cold War antecedents), placing a premium on American relations with Egypt. Barring new crises in Asia – a very real possibility -- and after a decade of post-Cold War uncertainty regarding the future of America's military posture, the war with Iraq has made it likely that American forces will remain in, or postured for a rapid return to the eastern Mediterranean, for some time to come.

Third, the Iraq war has spurred new thinking on both sides of the Atlantic regarding strategies for promoting and managing change around the Mediterranean and the Middle East, including the reach and role of key institutions. The experience of the war coincides, roughly, with the tenth anniversary of both the EU's Barcelona Process and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. Both processes have been troubled. But both seek to engage partners in the southern Mediterranean in political and security cooperation that has clearly become more important in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> context. Despite the generally negative effect of the Iraq war on north-south public diplomacy in the eastern Mediterranean, the war has spurred an official interest in more active dialogue on all sides. The political dimension is being driven, on the European side, by an increasingly conditional approach to relations with Mediterranean neighbors, indeed partners across the wider European neighborhood, including the Black Sea. The Bush Administration's Broader Middle East Initiative is cast even more generally, seeking to foster change

from North Africa to South Asia – “from Marrakesh to Bangladesh” – really, across the Muslim world as a whole.

The security dimension is also being refashioned and reinforced. The tenth anniversary review of the Barcelona process will almost certainly include a strong security and defense policy component, aiming at more extensive, practical defense cooperation with North African and Middle Eastern states, with the ability to proceed at a faster pace with selected partners if there is interest. Countries such as Israel and Jordan, and possibly Egypt, will be leading beneficiaries of this approach. At the same time, countries such as Syria may find themselves increasingly isolated by a European (and Atlantic) policy that is more conditional, and a la carte. NATO, too, will find itself with new demands for dialogue, cooperation and strategic reorientation in the south. After decades of marginalization and the more recent distractions of enlargement, the Mediterranean, above all the eastern basin, is now at the center of decisions about NATO's future. Over the next decade, the Alliance could well be driven toward a new round of enlargement, across the Mediterranean – a notion that would have been inconceivable ten years ago. At a minimum, the Alliance will move, indeed is already moving, from Mediterranean dialogue, to more active “partnership” and defense cooperation. It is a striking indication of the extent of strategic change in the region that Libya may soon be included in NATO's Mediterranean initiative. A stabilized Iraq could also benefit from membership in expanded NATO and EU dialogues.<sup>6</sup>

The Iraq war has also raised an important question of geographic definition for EU and NATO efforts in the south. To be sure, the designers of successive Mediterranean initiatives have long grappled with problem of scope. The proposed

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<sup>6</sup> Thanos Dokos, *NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Prospects and Policy Recommendations*, ELIAMEP Policy Paper No. 3 (Athens: ELIAMEP, 2003), p. 65.

Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) championed by Italy and Spain in the late 1980s and early 1990s, included countries in the Gulf. Today, it would probably include the Black Sea as well. CSCM, and later the Euro-Med partnership and a host of other Mediterranean cooperation initiatives have tried to balance central but sometimes competing interests. On the one hand, the initiatives have sought to promote and leverage Mediterranean “identity” for the purposes of confidence building and practical cooperation – and sometimes to meet perceived pressures from extra-regional actors. On the other hand, the security-related initiatives, in particular, have attempted to address concrete challenges, many of which clearly cut across regional lines.

In the current strategic environment, the leading influences on Mediterranean security affecting both north and south actually emanate from outside the region itself. Developments in the Gulf, the Black Sea and Eurasia, and the policies of extra-regional actors such as the U.S. and Russia (and perhaps, in the future, India and China) will drive the Mediterranean security environment over the next decade. Few purely Mediterranean developments hold the same potential. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask whether current Mediterranean security initiatives, limited to the Mediterranean and its immediate hinterlands, still represent an effective approach? The EU and NATO are both grappling with this question. In somewhat different ways, the Broader Middle East Initiative, and the EU’s wider Neighborhood Policy, both reach over traditional Mediterranean frameworks to embrace a larger strategic space. If wider frames become the new organizing principle, Mediterranean cooperation per se may still acquire new vigor, driven by the original idea of common cultural identity, with security implications in an era of uncertain relations between Islam and the West.

## Confrontation or Engagement with Iran?

The looming American, and possibly wider Western confrontation with Iran is another element of change affecting the region. In the prevailing climate of close attention to homeland security risks, especially those posed by weapons of mass destruction, standing American concerns regarding Iran have acquired a harder edge.<sup>7</sup> To a substantial extent, these concerns are shared by European and other southern Mediterranean governments, and of course, by Israel. In Turkey, where security planners have long had to deal with Russian nuclear weapons as part of the strategic equation, the sense of risk has been relatively modest. But here, too, the perception of a long-term security challenge is growing.

In the wake of obvious intelligence mistakes regarding Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, there is understandable skepticism regarding Iranian weapons plans. In fact, the incorrect assumptions regarding Iraq's programs were widely shared in the period before the Iraq war, with essentially similar assessments to be heard in diverse European government offices, among independent analysts, and within UN agencies tasked with inspection of Iraqi sites. In the case of Iran, it is clear that there *is* an active nuclear development program with application outside the civilian realm. It is a program of long standing, dating to the period of the Shah. It is also a program that enjoys broad support among political sectors in Iran. Iran's nuclear enrichment facilities are dispersed and hardened. Given the scale of the program – openly discussed by Iranian officials – Iran can be regarded as a threshold nuclear weapons state.

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<sup>7</sup> See Kenneth Pollack and Ray Takeyh, "Taking on Tehran", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, No.2, March-April, 2005; *Iran: Time for A New Approach*, Report of an Independent Task Force (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004); and *Toward a New Iran Policy: Report of A Saban Center Symposium*, The Brookings Institution, November 23, 2004.

If the EU troika's efforts to derail Iran's enrichment program through diplomatic means succeed, this will almost certainly imply a wholesale restructuring of Tehran's relations with the West, including the U.S., with the prospect of much more active economic and political engagement, and the essential reintegration of Iran into the international system. An agreement along these lines would almost certainly have a security aspect, and this would need to include Washington – Iran's leading security preoccupation and deterrence challenge. Detente with Iran would go a long way toward defusing some of the leading security flashpoints in the Gulf and the eastern Mediterranean. It could have a positive and transforming effect on the security environment facing Israel, including the activities of non-state proxies such as Hezbollah. It would allow the U.S. to reconsider its own regional posture and priorities, against a background of potential crises on the Korean peninsula, and the longer-term competition with China. The current policy of the Bush Administration is to allow European leaders to play out the diplomatic hand in relations with Iran, but with little optimism about the prospects.

Much turns on the assessment of Iran's geopolitical outlook. The implications of a nuclear-armed Iran may differ substantially across a range of foreign policy postures. To the extent that Iran acts as a status quo power, concerned with bolstering its strategic weight and deterrent potential, but without a pronounced desire to reshape the regional order or export Islamic revolution, its nuclear ambitions might be accommodated, however uncomfortably. A revolutionary Iran, in geopolitical or ideological terms, would pose a very different risk, one that the U.S., Israel and possibly Europe, may not tolerate.

If Tehran opts to continue its enrichment program, possibly in the face of UN sanctions (unlikely given opposition from Russia and others on the Security Council) the possibility of a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities cannot be ruled out. Few analysts believe that the military option is a good one, if the goal is to eliminate Iran's nuclear potential. There are too many hardened targets, too widely dispersed. At best, a military strike might set back the Iranian program for a period of years. But under conditions of high concern regarding nuclear risks, that prospect might be sufficient to support the use of force.

A more ambitious variant of the military option, popular in some quarters, assumes that it might be possible to destabilize the regime in Tehran via careful strikes. Few analysts put much faith in this approach. The prevailing view on both sides of the Atlantic is that a military confrontation would strengthen nationalist sentiment within Iran, set back the cause of reform, and worsen the prospects for "regime change." With the situation in Iraq unresolved, there will be few enthusiasts for a more ambitious campaign aimed at driving the religious establishment from power. The military option, if chosen, would be driven by narrower security interests; at base, the belief that a nuclear-armed Iran cannot be accommodated. Few if any states in the eastern Mediterranean (including Israel) will be comfortable with a new conflict in the Gulf, even if some may have a stake in the military containment of Iran. Turkey, Israel and others will face critical decisions regarding the extent of their cooperation with the Washington. For all except Israel, some form of UN mandate would probably be essential – a fact that would be clear to American decision-makers. The West, and regional actors, would also have to contend with the likelihood of an Iranian response, probably in the form of intervention via proxies, in Iraq and possibly elsewhere across the Middle East. There is also a possibility of Iranian-sponsored terrorism against targets in the U.S. and Europe. The range of

Iranian response is wide, and could be played out over many years.

One quite plausible scenario is that Iran will move steadily toward a nuclear capability over the next decade, perhaps with repeated political and military confrontations along the way. This (along with events in North Korea) could spur further nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation across the broader Middle East. The emergence of one or more new nuclear-armed states around the eastern end of the Mediterranean over the next decade would be a transforming development for the region, and for those, like the U.S. and Russia, with regional interests. Western strategists would be compelled to address the reality of a larger and more diverse nuclear club, in a way that has not really been the case regarding India and Pakistan. As with Pakistan, the question of nuclear control would be a standing concern, with an open-ended potential for international action to secure "loose" weapons and technologies.

The effects of a nuclear Iran would likely be felt over a wide area, and certainly beyond Iran's borders. If Turkey remains within Western security institutions, as it almost certainly will, and if the NATO nuclear guarantee remains credible, it is difficult to imagine Turkey "going nuclear." But Ankara might feel compelled to respond in other ways, in terms of procurement and doctrine, with cascading effects on military balances and perceptions around the Black Sea and in the Aegean. Certainly, a nuclear Iran would become a central strategic problem for NATO and for a more active EU defense policy over the next decade. It could be expected to reinforce the nuclear dimension of Russian strategy and could bring Iran into closer strategic cooperation with China and India. New nuclear risks on the periphery of the Mediterranean, coupled with ballistic missiles of trans-Mediterranean range, would deepen the problem of European exposure to the retaliatory

consequences of American action in the Middle East. The entire question of security cooperation with Washington in regional contingencies, already badly strained by the Iraq experience, could become even more contentious.

Between the unstable situation in Iraq and the prospect of varying scenarios in the confrontation with Iran over nuclear matters, it is clear that developments in the Gulf over the next decade – indeed the next few years – will be prominent drivers of the security environment in the eastern Mediterranean. Other challenges, centered in the Gulf could also exert a strong influence, including the potential for turmoil or a change of regime in Saudi Arabia affecting global as well as regional energy security. New approaches to Mediterranean security and cooperation will find these questions, outside the traditional Mediterranean rubric, increasingly difficult to ignore.

### **Israeli-Palestinian Futures and the Middle East Peace Process**

Developments in Israel and its relations with the Palestinians and other Arab neighbors will be another source of potentially transforming change in the Mediterranean over the coming years. In the near-term, there will be a critical period in which Israel's disengagement from Gaza could be successfully consolidated, and could lead to a wider settlement on the West Bank, and rapid movement toward a two state solution.<sup>8</sup> There is, however, a risk that the withdrawal from Gaza will prove a source of new conflict, recasting the confrontation along revised geographic lines, with little prospect of an overall settlement. On the Palestinian side, there is a similar near-term challenge regarding the political future of the territories. Without demonstrable progress toward a settlement – and perhaps even

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<sup>8</sup> See Ian O. Lesser, *Israel and Palestine: Rethinking U.S. Stakes and Roles* – Report of a Pacific Council Workshop (Los Angeles: Pacific Council on International Policy, May 2005).

with it – the political center of gravity may well shift toward Hamas and "rejectionist" factions, giving a new opening to extremists.

Given the long-standing role of the Arab-Israeli conflict in eastern Mediterranean security, the fate of the peace process will have important repercussions. New dynamics on the Israeli and Palestinian side, and in the neighborhood (e.g., the potential for new nuclear powers in the region) may make it more difficult to contain the consequences of persistent conflict. A prolonged impasse in the peace process may no longer imply the status quo – undesirable but manageable for neighboring states – but rather a steadily deteriorating security climate, with the potential for new spillovers in Europe and elsewhere in the Middle East. Without movement toward a settlement, violent factions, backed by Tehran, may find themselves emboldened by a nuclear-armed sponsor. Or new alignments may emerge among groups focused on Israel, Iraq and global *jihad*. Europe has been remarkably immune to Palestinian terrorism since the wave of violence by the PLO, the PFLP and other groups in the 1970s and 1980s. Without a solution, Europe, including Greece and Turkey, will remain exposed to terrorism and political violence spurred by the Palestinian issue. In a wider sense, prolonged conflict will fuel existing proliferation dynamics and impede multilateral dialogue and confidence building along north-south lines – a persistent challenge for all Mediterranean initiatives.

By contrast, a resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and movement toward a durable settlement will do much to reduce the potential for conflict, local and regional, in the eastern Mediterranean. Even in the context of a two state solution, however, there will be residual sources of conflict affecting Israel and the Palestinians. Extremist elements on both sides may persist in their attempts to destabilize inter-communal

relations, and could enjoy support from state and non-state patrons. A formal settlement may not imply practical peace.

Over the next decade, the demands on the international community to consolidate, monitor and build on a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli settlement would be substantial. In the near-term, significant infrastructure spending will likely be required to ensure the viability of Gaza after an Israeli withdrawal, and to create physical and economic contiguity between Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>9</sup> These arrangements might rely, to an even greater extent than in the past, on European aid and investment. According to one estimate, the investment needs for Palestinian reconstruction alone might be in the range of \$30 billion – a large sum, but modest by the standards of current spending in Iraq. On the security side, there may well be a role for NATO on the ground, or over the horizon. Even with more *ad hoc* arrangements for monitoring and peacekeeping, the eastern Mediterranean would be at the center of much new activity. By virtue of their proximity, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus would be well placed to contribute to international reconstruction and monitoring, especially in an EU context. These efforts could also engage Arab partners in the Middle East and North Africa via NATO and EU Mediterranean initiatives.

### **New Dynamics in the Levant and North Africa**

For the moment, events in the Gulf – and American strategy in this sphere --- may be the leading engine of change in the eastern Mediterranean security environment. But developments within the region are also an important part of the equation.

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<sup>9</sup> A recent RAND study underscores the importance of physical contiguity to the viability of a future Palestinian state. Creating contiguity could require imaginative new approaches, including the construction of specialized “fly-overs,” and other infrastructure. See Steven Simon et al., *Helping A Palestinian State Succeed: Key Findings* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2005)

In Syria and Lebanon, political arrangements and patterns of influence are in flux. The regime of Bashar Al Assad has been under steady pressure from the U.S., Europe and the UN since the Iraq war. The catalog of international concerns spans Syria's ambivalent approach to stability in Iraq and the Middle East peace process, its armaments programs, the authoritarian nature of the regime, and above all, its prolonged military presence and continued interference in Lebanon. The Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon was clearly the direct result of international pressure and, presumably, a closely-considered calculus regarding regime survival. Allegations of Syrian involvement in a continuing stream of assassinations and bombings inside Lebanon suggest that Damascus may continue to play an active role in Lebanese politics from across the border. The 2005 test of several Syrian ballistic missiles pointed to the technical shortcomings of the Syrian program, and the regime's willingness to provoke American ire.<sup>10</sup>

With substantial changes in Lebanon over the past year, and with mounting pressure on Damascus over human rights and security issues, there is a possibility of even more sweeping political changes. Demands for democratization among liberal political elements coexist with increasing assertiveness on the part of Islamists and minorities. If the Baath regime in Damascus falls, it is most unlikely that the Alawite minority will retain its position of influence – it will be replaced by something else, whether liberal, Islamist or praetorian in orientation. Lebanon, with its more developed tradition of democratic governance may yet flourish in the post-occupation environment. But, as in Syria, there is also a possibility of

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<sup>10</sup> Syria launched apparently unsuccessful tests of Scud B (300 km range) and D (700 km range) missiles, the debris falling on Turkish territory. Steven Erlanger, "Syria Tests Three Missiles, Israelis Say," *International Herald Tribune*, June 4-5, 2005.

turmoil and political violence reminiscent of the civil war period; a nightmare scenario for Lebanon and its neighbors, including Israel and, possibly, a new Palestinian state. Here, too, there could be demands for international peacekeeping and peace enforcement activities in a UN, NATO or EU context.

In North Africa, there have been some positive developments alongside new uncertainties. Libya's divestiture of its WMD programs, a hodge-podge of technologies with limited military value, but a standing source of strategic concern for Europe and the U.S., removes a leading flashpoint for conflict in the central Mediterranean. This development has particular relevance for southern Europe given Libya's development of ballistic missiles of trans-Mediterranean range, and Col. Qaddafi's periodic threats to retaliate against Greek and Italian territory if bases in these countries were used to facilitate strikes against Libya. Libya's unsuccessful Scud missile attack against an American LORAN station on the Italian island of Lampedusa in 1986 remains the only trans-Mediterranean attack of this kind to date.

It can be argued that Libya's change of course in relations with Washington and the West was spurred by the Iraq experience, and recognition that possession of an active WMD program, however rudimentary, would expose the country to preventive action, and possibly "regime change." In all likelihood, other factors came into play. The Libyan regime had signaled its interest in detente for several years prior to the Iraq war, and had reportedly shared some intelligence with Washington after September 11<sup>th</sup>. The settlement with the Lockerbie victims' families was already in train, and by all accounts, the need for new Western investment in the petroleum sector is a key concern for the regime. In short, the Libyan *volte face* is almost certainly a product of multiple influences, many of which are at work elsewhere in the southern Mediterranean. Libya's shift from pariah state to a candidate for closer integration along

multiple fronts, including north-south security cooperation, is an example of the gathering pace and scope of change in the Mediterranean. Over the next few years, it is quite possible, even likely, that Libya will join NATO's Mediterranean initiative (on the pattern of Algeria a few years earlier) and perhaps the re-launched Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Egypt poses challenges of a very different sort. The country's size and prominence in Arab affairs, including the Middle East peace process, makes it a key regional actor and a key interlocutor for Europe and the U.S. Can Egypt remain isolated from the pressures for reform and integration being felt elsewhere across the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East? This is unlikely. The Mubarak regime will face a challenge of leadership transition, perhaps in the near term. The government's modest moves in the direction of electoral reform have disappointed many Western observers and, above all, opposition elements within the country. The regime is being pressed by a range of actors, from the Bush Administration to NGOs, to democratize. Internally, the Muslim Brotherhood and more extreme Islamist factions have become more active. The government, for its part, is quick to point to a resurgence of Islamist violence as evidence of Egypt's own terrorism problem – and need for Western support. After decades of stasis, Egypt's internal scene may be poised for greater turmoil.

Instability, and possibly the advent of a different regime in Egypt, could affect the security environment in the eastern Mediterranean in a number of important ways. Turmoil could spur large-scale migration to southern Europe and neighboring states in North Africa (or it might not, as the Algerian case demonstrates). The advent of a more radical Islamist or nationalist regime could fundamentally alter the moderate character of Egyptian policy toward Israel and relations with the West. This could be problematic in the absence of a

comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli settlement, especially in Gaza, where Egypt is in a position to exert considerable influence, and has security interests of its own. Western commercial access to the Suez Canal is unlikely to be disturbed. But naval transits, by the U.S. Sixth Fleet and European forces, could become highly unpredictable, compromising the ability to shift forces rapidly between the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. More broadly, a change of orientation in Egypt could complicate already difficult security dialogues between north and south, within NATO and the Barcelona framework. Even if the Egyptian system remains largely unchanged – the most likely case -- a return to even moderate levels of political violence would have an isolating effect, impeding the development of a key regional state, with negative implications for neighboring societies.

Taken together, the turmoil and pressures for political change set in train by September 11<sup>th</sup> and the Iraq war have changed the security scene in the eastern Mediterranean in significant ways, underscoring the importance of influences from beyond the Mediterranean basin. The range of possible scenarios for the evolution of societies around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is wider than in the past – a development analogous in some ways to the situation in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of Communism, but with less reason for optimism about the future.

### **Aegean Stability**

One of the most significant changes on the regional security scene over the past decade has been the rise of detente between Greece and Turkey. This relaxation of tension has all but removed one of the leading flashpoints for armed conflict in Europe, and has transformed attitudes toward the region in Brussels and Washington. The durability and direction of

Aegean detente are key questions for the future of security in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>11</sup>

The Imia/Kardak crisis of 1996 has been likened to the Cuban missile crisis in its palpable sense of risk and peering over the brink. It marked a turning point, reinforced by the effect of the 1988 earthquakes on public opinion in both countries. By 1999, with tensions over the planned deployment of S-300 surface-to-air missiles in Cyprus resolved, and with the Ocalan affair off the bilateral agenda, the way was open for a new, strategic approach to relations in Athens and Ankara. Athens' decision to support Turkey's bid for EU candidacy at the Helsinki summit in December 1999 was another critical development – perhaps *the* critical development in the sense that it cast the emerging bilateral detente in a wider European, even transatlantic context. Personalities, too, played an important role. It is arguable that little progress would have been made without the vision and personal rapport of then foreign ministers Ismail Cem and George Papandreou, a climate that has been maintained with subsequent changes in political leadership on both sides.

Several points are worth noting about the nature of the current Greek-Turkish detente in regional, geopolitical terms. First, after nearly a decade, the change in relations shows every sign of being strategic, rather than tactical. It had long been obvious that neither country had an interest in conflict that would pose incalculable risks for both societies. In the wake of Imia/Kardak, the question of crisis management and confidence building acquired considerable importance as seen from both sides. On the Greek side, the move toward detente was part of a larger grand strategic decision to complete the normalization of Greek

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<sup>11</sup> For a wide ranging discussion of various dimensions of the relationship and prospects, see Mustafa Aydin and Kostas Ifantis, eds., *Turkish-Greek Relations: The Security Dilemma in the Aegean* (London: Routledge, 2004).

policy, consolidate Greece's position in Europe, and promote the anchoring of Turkey in European institutions – not unlike the long-term strategy of France toward Germany after the Second World War. This element in Greek policy has been maintained and extended by the Karamanlis government, and could be seen in Greek support for the opening of formal Turkey-EU accession negotiations in October 2005. The military balance with Turkey remains a concern for Greek planners, against a backdrop of unresolved air and sea space disputes in the Aegean (and military spending in both countries remains much higher than the European average).<sup>12</sup> The Turkish threat remains at the top of the Greek security agenda. But in practical terms, the proximate risks to Greek security are to be found elsewhere, in continued Balkan uncertainties, uncontrolled migration, transnational crime, terrorism, and the environment.

For Turkey, the relaxation in relations with Greece was similarly strategic, an essential component, indeed a prerequisite for active pursuit of the country's EU aspirations. There was always a degree of asymmetry in the perception of threat as seen from Athens and Ankara. Turkish strategists certainly took – and take – Greece seriously from a defense planning perspective. But for Ankara, risks in the Aegean have been just one of a range of hard security challenges on the country's borders. With growing instability and tension on Turkey's Middle Eastern flank, and a costly internal security challenge in the Kurdish areas of southeast Anatolia, Turkey welcomed the opportunity to shift its energy and resources to meet problems elsewhere.

Second, Greek-Turkish detente has changed the security-related perspectives of external actors in the eastern Mediterranean. Crisis management in the Aegean and Cyprus had been a

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<sup>12</sup> See Thanos Dokos, "Tension-Reduction and Confidence-Building in the Aegean," in Aydin and Ifantis, *Turkish-Greek Relations*, pp. 123-144.

leading concern for Americans and Europeans for decades, as a matter of NATO cohesion during the Cold War, and as a matter of regional stability in the 1990s. Fear that instability in the Balkans could lead to a confrontation between Greece and Turkey (in the event, a misplaced fear; Athens and Ankara have both opted for cooperative, multilateral policies in the Balkans) was a leading rationale for American engagement in the region, including the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Aegean detente has greatly simplified the environment for American, European and NATO policy in the eastern Mediterranean.

Third, better relations in the Aegean hold the potential for more active Greek-Turkish cooperation on regional and functional issues of mutual concern. This has already been the case in relation to humanitarian and peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. Similar potential exists in relation to the Black Sea, and possibly the Middle East peace process (especially in an EU context). Both countries have a strong stake in the management of energy security and environmental risks, as well as maritime safety and security. Practical cooperation of this kind would be very difficult to envision under conditions of Greek-Turkish confrontation of the kind seen in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Fourth, consolidating and extending the progress that has been made in relations between Greece and Turkey is now highly dependent on developments in Turkish-EU relations.<sup>13</sup> There remains a large, uncompleted agenda of dispute resolution and confidence building measures between Athens and Ankara. Confidence building and cooperation measures that have been agreed (e.g., a series of sectoral agreements, plans for military disengagement, and a recently launched "hotline") will need to

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<sup>13</sup> For a series of papers documenting discussions conducted in the wake of the December 2005 Brussels summit, see Marisa R. Lino, ed., *Greek-Turkish Relations: A Key to Stability in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Bologna: SAIS, 2005).

be fully implemented. Expanding commercial ties, led by business figures on both sides, have been an important engine of detente, but these too are sensitive to the political atmosphere.

The strategic quality of the detente has been tied to an assumption of continued progress in Turkey's EU candidacy. This was the prospect formally confirmed by the December 2004 Brussels summit decision, and reaffirmed by the start of accession talks in October 2005. Yet, within months of the summit, there was a marked deterioration in the atmosphere surrounding Turkey's candidacy, a function of uncertainty within Europe, capped by the French and Dutch rejection of the proposed European constitution, and rising nationalism within Turkish society. The atmosphere in the wake of the October 3 opening of formal membership negotiations has been little better. The alternative of "privileged partnership" has been kept off the formal agenda, but the entirely open-ended nature of the process lurks just beneath the surface of an increasingly skeptical debate in Turkey and key EU states. Given the very long time-frame for Turkey's EU candidacy, the widespread reticence of European publics, and the potential for pronounced changes in the outlook over time, decision-makers and analysts will need to consider the implications of a much wider range of scenarios in Turkey-EU relations – and the consequences for Aegean detente. Simply put, can Greek-Turkish relations remain positive if Turkey's candidacy proves hollow? The short answer is possibly, yes. But both sides will have a strong stake in developing effective measures to ensure that the prospect of a Greek-Turkish clash, whether deliberate or accidental, is no longer a prominent feature of the strategic environment. In this case, the content of the detente may need to move in directions independent of European policy, aimed at resolving the substance of disagreement in the Aegean, sooner rather than later. An atmosphere of resurgent nationalism in Europe and

Turkey may make dialogue and agreement more difficult in the years ahead. In the worst case, discord in Europe and reversals in Turkish-EU relations could encourage a “re-nationalization” of strategy on both sides of the Aegean, increasing the risk of miscalculation, conflict and escalation – an unlikely scenario, but a sobering one.

Cyprus remains part of this equation, although arguably no longer as central or risk-prone a factor as in the past. The failure of the Greek Cypriot referendum on the Annan Plan can be interpreted as disruptive to the strategic interests of both Greece and Turkey. Over time, with Cypriot membership in the EU, and if the generally positive atmosphere in Greek-Turkish relations continues, it is likely that the Annan Plan, or something like it, may be put to the vote again, and may well succeed. Certainly, by almost any measure, the situation on the island is more stable than at any time in the recent past, and the ability of friction on Cyprus to disrupt regional stability much reduced. Cyprus remains a nationalist issue with considerable weight in Greece and Turkey. But the past few years have seen a marked distancing of Athens and Ankara from their respective partners on the island – a “decoupling” of interests, to use an accurate if unpopular phrase.

In net terms, Cyprus is now less central to security and strategy in the eastern Mediterranean, and is certainly a less prominent concern for American and European policymakers. The island itself is not “strategic” in the traditional sense of the term, although it could acquire new importance over time as a center for EU or NATO engagement in peacekeeping and crisis management in the Mediterranean and the Levant. A NATO that looks southward and seeks to develop a more active strategy toward the Mediterranean and the Middle East, may well want to have Cyprus as a member, united or not.

## Turkey as a Strategic Actor

Over the past few years, Turkish external policy has been driven by the imperative of consolidating the country's EU candidacy. With the opening of accession negotiations in October 2005, many aspects of Turkish foreign and security policy continue to reflect the need to accommodate European opinion. But with the candidacy facing a long and uncertain path, Turkish national interests and preferences are likely to reassert themselves, particularly on the country's Middle Eastern borders.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to Turkish policy in the Balkans, the Black Sea and elsewhere, Ankara has displayed a greater willingness to act unilaterally in the Middle East, an area Turks tend to regard as a source of risk rather than opportunity, closely tied to the country's internal security interests.<sup>15</sup> The resurgence of PKK violence, and the possibility of terrorism spreading to urban areas outside southeast Anatolia, has increased Turkish concern regarding developments in northern Iraq, and the overall evolution of Kurdish nationalism on both sides of the border.

Turkish policymakers and observers have warned repeatedly that moves toward an independent Kurdish state, or further pressure on the Turkmen population in and around Kirkuk, could lead to Turkish military intervention. Turkey has maintained a security presence in northern Iraq for over a decade, and is capable of a substantial military incursion in the area of Kirkuk. Whether an intervention of this kind could be sustained, logistically – and politically – is another matter. A Turkish

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<sup>14</sup> For a recent discussion of Turkey's external strategy and relations with the West, see Soner Cagaptay, *Turkey at a Crossroads: Preserving Ankara's Western Orientation* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to Alan Makovsky for this characterization of Turkish perceptions of the Middle East.

military intervention across the border, if undertaken outside a UN or NATO context, would have an extraordinarily negative effect on Turkey's EU aims. So, the inclination to use force in the region, even in hot pursuit of PKK elements, may turn critically on the overall nature of relations with the EU over the coming months and years. The American presence in Iraq may be transient, but Turkey will need to live with the successor state, or states, whatever their character. Even among Turkey's western oriented elites, there is persistent suspicion regarding Washington's approach to Iraq, and a sense that Turkey's interests are not being taken into account.<sup>16</sup>

A decade ago, Turkish-Syrian friction over the latter's support for the PKK very nearly brought the two countries into conflict. Today, the relationship is no longer a leading flashpoint in regional geopolitics. Turkey will be concerned about the prospects for Syrian stability, and the future path of the country's longstanding WMD programs. But absent a revival of Syrian support for the PKK, Syrian risks are unlikely to figure prominently in Turkish planning. Indeed, over the past two years, the Erdogan government has pursued an active policy of normalization with Damascus, a policy somewhat at odds with the increasingly critical stance of Turkey's Western partners toward the Assad regime. In political and security terms, Turkey will have a strong stake in the *status quo* on its southern border, even as the U.S. and others look to reform or change the regime in Damascus.

Turkey's strategic relationship with Israel has proved remarkably durable over the past decade, weathering significant political

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<sup>16</sup> This is part of a longstanding tradition of suspicion regarding Western, including U.S. and NATO intentions toward Turkey—the Sevres syndrome, analyzed extensively by Kemal Kirisci and others. See Soner Cagaptay, "Can the U.S. Win Turkey Over in 2005: Understanding EU Dynamics and Confidence Building in Iraq", *Policywatch* No. 939 (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2005).

changes and successive crises in Palestinian-Israeli relations. Given the prominence of the Palestinian issue in Turkish public opinion, and marked ambivalence toward Israel in many quarters within AKP, it is unlikely that the Erdogan government, given a choice, would have embarked on a broad-based relationship with Israel.<sup>17</sup> But elements of the relationship have now become structural and difficult to modify, including substantial defense industrial and economic cooperation. Israel and Turkey share a concern about Iranian (and other) missile and nuclear programs across the region, although Ankara is unlikely to openly support an Israeli strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. The relationship with Israel appears to be one of the areas of Turkish foreign and security policy where the influence of the military remains substantial. That said, with the decline in Turkey's perception of threat from Syria, and strains in U.S.-Turkish relations, the strategic relationship with Israel – and the U.S.-Turkish-Israeli triangle – cannot be regarded as a “permanently operating factor” in regional security.

U.S.-Turkish relations, a leading element in the eastern Mediterranean security equation for decades, have experienced great strain in recent years. The basis for bilateral cooperation in regional contingencies has not disappeared, but the calculus of cooperation has changed enormously since the Gulf War of 1990. To an important extent, the change reflects the evolution of Turkey's own foreign and security policy debate, where public opinion now counts heavily, and considerations of nationalism and sovereignty retain their full weight. Over the last decade, Turkish cooperation in the defense area has been no less central to American thinking about the relationship than during the Cold War years. But in reality, this aspect of the relationship has been troubled. With the exception of the highly constrained use

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<sup>17</sup> See Lesser, “Turkey: ‘Recessed’ Islamic Politics and Convergence with the West,” in Angel Rabasa et al., *The Muslim World After 9/11* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2004), pp. 175-205.

of Incirlik airbase for Operation Northern Watch, Ankara has been very reluctant to allow the use of Turkish facilities for any strategic operations against Iraq since 1991. The potential for regional security cooperation is substantial, with Turkey emerging as a more capable security actor in its own right. Taking advantage of this potential, however, will require new thinking, within and outside the NATO frame.<sup>18</sup> Ankara and Washington continue to take compatible approaches to policy in *some* key areas, including the Balkans, aspects of the Middle East peace process, and stability and reform around the Black Sea. NATO, too, remains an effective vehicle for collaboration from the Turkish perspective. But on the priority issues of the moment – Iraq, Iran, Syria, and potentially Russia – the gaps in perception and approach are substantial.

With regard to Iran's nuclear program, the Turkish approach has been firmly in the European mainstream, with a distinct preference for diplomatic and economic engagement in relations with Tehran. Turkey would, clearly, prefer not to have one or more new nuclear weapons states in its neighborhood over the next decade. But despite growing attention to proliferation risks in the Turkish strategic debate, the military option in response to a nuclear-ready Iran is not one that Ankara favors. In a narrow sense, Turkey would be the beneficiary of strikes that might set back Iran's nuclear and missile ambitions by many years. In a wider sense, Turkey would be concerned about the potential stimulus to Iranian nationalism, and the regional instability that might flow from conflict with Iran. If Iran does "go nuclear" over the next decade, Turkey will face new strategic choices, with implications for military balances and strategic perceptions in the eastern Mediterranean. Ankara is unlikely to pursue a nuclear option itself, especially if NATO (and

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Morton I. Abramowitz, Richard Burt et al., *Turkey on the Threshold: Europe's Decision and U.S. Interests* (Washington: The Atlantic Council, 2004).

perhaps European) security guarantees retain their credibility. But Turkey –and others – might explore new conventional capabilities and doctrines aimed at countering this new risk.<sup>19</sup> How these would be interpreted by neighbors in the Aegean, around the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, will depend very much on the prevailing climate in relations with Athens, Moscow and Washington.

### **Influences from the Black Sea – and Beyond**

In some respects, the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea can be regarded as a single strategic space, but with very different patterns of security presence, cooperation and architecture. In terms of maritime and energy security, the strategic environment in both seas is increasingly integrated. Both areas are characterized by trans-regional challenges, cutting across traditional definitions of European, Eurasian and Middle Eastern security.

Russia, a leading security actor in the Mediterranean during the Cold War, has very little residual security engagement in the eastern Mediterranean apart from arms sales. But Russia is a leading stakeholder and security actor in the Black Sea. If Russian-Western relations take a more competitive course over the next decade, this competition is likely to be played out, in large measure, around the Black Sea, with particular implications for Turkish security. The extraordinary degree of political flux around the northern and eastern shores of the Black Sea points to widely varied security futures for the region, from closer integration and cooperation among largely democratic states, to more tumultuous and conflict-prone relations among troubled, even failed states. In either case, there is likely to be growing interest in Black Sea cooperation

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<sup>19</sup> Ian Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Summer 2004.

within BSEC and other forums over the next decade, with maritime security and crisis management as natural areas for involvement.<sup>20</sup> Both the EU and NATO will undoubtedly pursue more active Black Sea initiatives of their own, and these may well be viewed with concern by Moscow.<sup>21</sup> The extent of Russian resistance to greater American engagement in the region can already be seen in the recent Russian veto of proposed American observer status in BSEC.

Turkish strategists tend to view Russia as a long-term strategic competitor, and Russia still figures prominently on Turkey's defense agenda. But Turkish-Russian economic relations have expanded enormously over the past decade, led by energy trade, and have recently been reinforced by high-level political dialogue. With the opening of the Blue Stream pipeline for the delivery of larger quantities of Russian gas to Turkish markets, and perhaps onward to markets elsewhere, economic ties have taken a new step forward. The result is growing interdependence, with wider strategic implications. American observers are already beginning to speculate on the future direction of Turkish policy if Ankara is torn between Russian and U.S. preferences in the Black Sea. In this, as in other areas, Turkish policy preferences will be influenced by the overall state of bilateral relations with Washington, and the health of the transatlantic relationship.

The growing prominence of the Black Sea in security perceptions is part of a wider pattern of new regional influences on the Mediterranean scene. The long-heralded opening of the

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<sup>20</sup> See Ioannis Stribis, "The Evolving Security Concern in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 3, September 2003, pp. 130-160.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of European stakes and possible initiatives, see Terry Adams, Michael Emerson, Laurence Mee, Marius Vahl and Yannis Papanikolaou, *Europe's Black Sea Dimension* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies and the International Center for Black Sea Studies, Athens, 2002).

Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline will bring important new amounts of Caspian oil to world markets. Together with the very large amounts of oil that can be brought to the Mediterranean via pipelines (operating at full capacity) from Iraq to Turkey, the Baku-Ceyhan line contributes to the growing role of the eastern Mediterranean as an energy conduit, and an important vehicle for diversification in energy security terms. If energy prices remain at current high levels, or continue to rise, it is possible to envision the emergence of a Mediterranean energy market, with its own pricing and dynamics, although refiners in the eastern Mediterranean itself may continue to prefer less expensive "sour" crude from the Middle East over Caspian sources.<sup>22</sup> The Suez Canal, and transits through the Bosphorus, will also be part of this equation.

The proliferation of new energy routes, and especially gas pipelines, around the Mediterranean and its hinterlands is uniting previously distinct economies (e.g., it will be possible to distribute Algerian gas via Italy and the Adriatic to the Balkans and Turkey) and encouraging interest in new security arrangements to protect this complex and costly infrastructure. It is a promising area for cooperation on a Mediterranean and sub-regional basis. It will also raise new issues for the transatlantic debate about energy security. In past decades, this debate has focused largely on oil, and above all, the Persian Gulf. In the future, Europe, in particular, will have a more pronounced stake in the security of gas imports from its Mediterranean periphery. Unlike oil, gas remains a regional rather than a global commodity, and inevitably engages transatlantic interests in different ways.

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<sup>22</sup> Terry Adams, "Caspian Oil and Gas Development and the Black Sea Region: An Overview", in Adams et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension*, p. 48.

The Mediterranean may also be affected by the growing Asian demand for Middle Eastern oil and gas, as a factor in global energy markets, and via more direct Chinese and Indian involvement in regional economies and defense. China is already a visible player in the economic development of Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. China, North Korea and Pakistan have played key roles in the proliferation of missile and nuclear technology around the Mediterranean basin. India has emerged as a strategic partner of some importance for Israel, and is poised to develop more extensive ties with Turkey and Iran. In security as well as economic terms, the eastern Mediterranean is an increasingly globalized environment.

### **New Functional Concerns**

An alternative approach to security in the eastern Mediterranean focuses on the functional dimension, cutting across geographic lines. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, problems of terrorism and political violence, and energy security are well-established items on the Mediterranean strategic agenda.<sup>23</sup> In the area of soft security, migration and refugee flows have long been part of the environment, with special significance as seen from southern Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Looking ahead, several other functional issues are set to become more prominent in the eastern Mediterranean. First, it is likely that environmental security, broadly defined, will reemerge as an area of activism. Environmental diplomacy in the Mediterranean enjoyed considerable attention in the context

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<sup>23</sup> See Mark Smith et al., "Fighting Proliferation – European Perspectives," *Chaillot Paper* No. 66 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies), December 2003; and Ian O. Lesser and Ashley Tellis, *Strategic Exposure: Proliferation Around the Mediterranean* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of regionalism as a factor in Mediterranean migration, see Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Mediterranean Migrations: Regionalisms versus Globalization," *Finisterra*, xxxix, 77, 2004, pp. 9-20.

of the UN-sponsored Barcelona Convention, the Mediterranean Action Plan of 1975 and its 1995 review. Since that time, cooperation has proceeded in a haphazard manner. New initiatives are likely to focus on more active monitoring, intervention and crisis response – activities made more critical with the steady increase in oil and gas trade in the eastern Mediterranean. Given the tremendous importance of tourism revenues to virtually all Mediterranean states (even Libya may acquire a stake in this over the next decade), the consequences of a major oil spill in the Aegean or elsewhere could be catastrophic for regional economies, as well as the natural environment. This is, among other things, an ideal area for Greek-Turkish cooperation and confidence-building.<sup>25</sup>

Second, maritime security generally is an emerging issue, touching on counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation interests, in addition to more traditional interdiction and search and rescue concerns.<sup>26</sup> The discovery of several attempts by terrorists to attack shipping in the Mediterranean as a mean of economic and possibly environmental disruption, underscores the vulnerability of sea lanes in the Adriatic, the Black Sea and the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean as a whole. The risk of super-terrorism, employing weapons delivered by sea, or environmental terrorism on a super scale, will drive cooperation at a more sophisticated level, including more widespread use of nuclear monitoring systems at key ports around the eastern Mediterranean. Piracy, on the rise worldwide, is a risk in the Red Sea approaches to the Suez Canal, and potentially elsewhere. The monitoring and rescue of migrants at sea has become a leading issue for Italy, Greece and Turkey, and could acquire

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<sup>25</sup> See Nesrin Algan, "Environmental Security in the Aegean Sea" in Aydin and Ifantis, pp. 185-210.

<sup>26</sup> The U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) has a particularly strong Mediterranean dimension.

even greater significance in the event of turmoil or economic collapse in a major southern Mediterranean state. These pressing, functional issues have moved to the top of the security agenda on both sides of the Mediterranean, and are among the most promising areas for north-south defense cooperation in NATO and EU frames, and as issues for new sub-regional and bilateral collaboration. A series of dramatic incidents in the fall of 2005, involving African migrants attempting to enter Spain via the border between Morocco and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, has spurred the development of a formal EU-Africa dialogue on the management of illegal immigration, with relevance to north-south relations in the eastern as well as the western Mediterranean.

Third, policymakers and publics around the eastern Mediterranean are increasingly likely to define security, and frame security strategies in terms of "human security" and personal security.<sup>27</sup> Terrorism, crime, health, environment – these and related issues are likely to occupy prominent places in strategic debates that once featured more conventional risks (the risk of Asian bird flu entering Europe via Turkey and the Black Sea offers a striking example of the kind of non-traditional, transnational risks confronting policymakers). Human rights will also be part of this equation, especially in north-south terms. In the past, Europe and the U.S. discussed Mediterranean security largely in terms of international disputes and crises. Today, the most pressing challenges are essentially questions of internal and human security -- a notable point of convergence among societies on both sides of the Mediterranean. The tendency to view security through the lens of internal risks is no longer limited to states in the south.

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<sup>27</sup> On the "civilizational" and identity dimension, see Gilles Kepel, "Political and Religious Frontiers in the Mediterranean," *Tribuna Mediterranea* No. 5 (Barcelona: IEMed, 2004).

## The Eastern Mediterranean in Transatlantic Strategies

Recent developments in the Mediterranean affect European and American interests in a variety of ways, similar in some cases, different in others. Greek-Turkish detente has removed a leading source of concern and drain on diplomatic energy on both sides of the Atlantic. Continued conflict in Palestinian-Israeli relations jeopardizes American strategic interests across the broader Middle East, and poses a range of more direct security risks for Europe. Both Europe and the U.S. are affected by unresolved crises around the Mediterranean hinterland, and especially in the Gulf. That said, the region occupies a somewhat different place in the prevailing European and American strategic outlooks.<sup>28</sup>

It was never entirely accurate to speak of a "European" strategy toward the eastern Mediterranean, although elements of such a strategy have been articulated via the EU's Mediterranean Strategy, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, enlargement policy vis-a-vis Turkey and the Balkans, and participation in the Middle East peace process.<sup>29</sup> The European Security Strategy document is explicit in its emphasis on regional and functional problems in the Mediterranean region.<sup>30</sup> Within the EU, the countries of southern Europe, together with France, have had a

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<sup>28</sup> See Roberto Aliboni, ed., *Peace, Institution- and Nation-Building in the Mediterranean and the Middle East: Tasks for Transatlantic Cooperation* (Rome: IAI, 2003); and Lesser, "The United States and Euro-Mediterranean Relations: Evolving Attitudes and Strategies," *EuroMeSCo Briefs* (Lisbon: IEEI, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> See Alvaro de Vasconcelos et al., "A European Strategic Concept for the Mediterranean," *Lumiar Papers* No. 9 (Lisbon: IEEI, 2002); and Vasconcelos, "Launching the Euro-Mediterranean Security Dialogue," *EuroMeSCo Briefs*, January 2004.

<sup>30</sup> See *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2003); and Alyson J.K. Bailes, "U.S. and EU Strategy Concepts: A Mirror for Partnership and Difference?," *The International Spectator*, Vol. xxix, no. 1., January-March 2004.

more pronounced interest in Mediterranean strategy and initiatives, although these interests are probably more balanced in the eastern Mediterranean than elsewhere. Turkey, Iraq and the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, in different ways, are issues of Europe-wide interest. European policy in the Maghreb and the western Mediterranean is of keen interest to Portugal, Spain and France, but less absorbing for Germany or Greece. To generalize, developments in the eastern Mediterranean have the potential to affect Europe as a whole, whereas developments in the western Mediterranean do not – a reality that has influenced the direction and character of the EU's Mediterranean security engagement over time. To the extent that the Barcelona Process is refashioned to celebrate its tenth anniversary in late 2005, it is likely to acquire new reach and activities aimed largely at the eastern Mediterranean, and perhaps the Gulf.

Beyond the Barcelona Process, there has been a marked eastward shift in the center of gravity of Mediterranean security and strategy over the past decade. This shift has been felt in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, which has recently been enhanced to permit more extensive security cooperation with the most interested and capable partners – most of whom are in the eastern Mediterranean. The launch of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative involving Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, moves the center of gravity of NATO's southern engagement even further eastward.

American strategy, in particular, has favored the eastern basin of the Mediterranean, where hard security risks are prominent, and the diplomatic and defense requirements are most intensive. Indeed, American strategists and policymakers now seem inclined to leave security in the Maghreb and the western Mediterranean largely to European partners, an inclination reinforced by the new detente with Libya (the Balkans may be another area where American planners see Europe as taking the

lead, even in the context of looming decisions on the future of Kosovo). The Iraq war has underscored American interest in the eastern Mediterranean as an avenue for power projection to the Gulf and Eurasia. Current plans to restructure America's military presence in and around Europe emphasize the progressive withdrawal of forces still based in Germany, and the development of new bases and access relationships around the Balkans and the Black Sea – a marked shift of military power to Europe's southern and eastern periphery. Whether these new basing relationships will prove predictable in future crises is an open question.

Incirlik airbase in southern Turkey is, in theory, ideally placed for the projection of power to the Levant, the Gulf and parts of Eurasia. But recent experience shows that strategic cooperation can be unpredictable, even among NATO allies. American planners will likely favor a portfolio approach in future strategy, minimizing the risks to access and reducing the likelihood that any one ally will feel "singularized."<sup>31</sup>

Both Europe and the U.S. face a period of reassessment in their cooperation on pressing issues, and in transatlantic security arrangements. In both dimensions, the eastern Mediterranean will supply key tests. The question of Turkish membership, or more precisely the quality of Turkish-EU relations over an extended candidacy, will play a large part in defining the future of Europe's security engagement on the periphery of the continent. The U.S. will have similarly strong stakes in reviving a dysfunctional strategic relationship with Ankara. The failure to do so will impose substantial limitations on American strategy in multiple areas. Europe and the U.S. have pronounced interests in continued, indeed accelerated Turkish convergence with the

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<sup>31</sup> See Lesser, *NATO Looks South: New Challenges and New Strategies in the Mediterranean* (Santa Monica, RAND, 2000), p. 61.

EU. A Turkey at arm's length from Europe is also likely to prove a more difficult partner for Washington. From a Turkish perspective, the worst scenario is one in which the country faces multiple security challenges, transatlantic relations are strained, and Ankara is compelled to choose between European and American policies. Under these conditions, nationalism is likely to play an even more prominent role, with negative consequences for Turkey's neighbors.

The next decade will almost certainly see new pressures on both NATO and the EU to expand their engagement and security responsibilities southward, and eastward.<sup>32</sup> It is not unlikely that NATO will take on a formal role in security management across large parts of the broader Middle East, putting the eastern Mediterranean at the center of a strategic space extending to the Gulf, and perhaps beyond. Under these conditions, current Mediterranean security initiatives may be overtaken or made redundant by arrangements of wider scope, reaching beyond the Mediterranean basin. Within the Mediterranean, there may be renewed interest in concepts like the CSCM proposal of the late 1980s, or more likely, a search for new sub-regional or functional approaches to security cooperation.

The convergence of transatlantic interest in eastern Mediterranean security means that simple concepts regarding the division of labor are unlikely to work. A decade ago, it was possible to posit a strategy of specialization in the region, with NATO and the U.S. handling hard security challenges, and the EU and individual European states handling political dialogue and economic development.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See Fred Tanner, "NATO's Role in Mideast Defence Cooperation and Democratization," *The International Spectator*, xxxix, no. 4, October-December 2004.

<sup>33</sup> See Roberto Aliboni, "The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Regional and Transatlantic Challenges", *Opinions*, SAIS Center for Transatlantic Relations, Cooperative Security Program, 2003.

Looking ahead, this approach is surely untenable. Regardless of the pace of EU efforts to develop a common security and defense policy, the eastern Mediterranean is an area where Europe will have (in fact, already has) the capacity to act in security terms. At the same time, America's intensive engagement in the Middle East will require a degree of political and economic commitment to match Europe's Mediterranean strategy. A Palestinian-Israeli settlement, or management of the conflict in the absence of a settlement, will likely require pooled resources, and a more prominent role for Europe – however uncomfortable for American and Israeli policymakers.

## Conclusions and Policy Implications

This analysis points to a number of conclusions regarding the emerging security environment in the eastern Mediterranean, with significant implications for policy and planning on both sides of the Atlantic.

First, the range of possible scenarios for the evolution of specific states around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean – indeed, the evolution of the eastern Mediterranean as a whole – is now much wider than in the past. Internal forces, the experience of the Iraq war, and the emergence of more active strategies on the part of key security actors mean that the status quo cannot be taken for granted, and patterns of change may be rapid and non-linear. Ten years from now, major states of the region may look very different in terms of their governance and external policies. The so-called arc of crisis is now better described as an *arc of change*. Strategists on both sides of the Atlantic, and especially within the region, will need to anticipate and plan for more unusual and fast-paced developments.

Second, the eastern Mediterranean has moved to the center of Western strategic concerns, a shift that will be reinforced by the prospective enlargement of security responsibilities and engagements on Europe's periphery. Security in the Black Sea, the Red Sea and the Gulf will be more closely integrated with the Mediterranean, and new security arrangements, within NATO and the EU, will need to look well beyond the Mediterranean basin itself. As a result, existing Mediterranean initiatives may need to be recast to feature sub-regional or specific, functional areas for cooperation and response. The tenth anniversary of the Barcelona process, and the growing attention to NATO's role in the south, provide good opportunities to move in this direction. Overall, transatlantic

roles in the region will be more balanced than in the past, with Washington more engaged in political change, and Europe more active in hard security management on the Mediterranean periphery. Regional actors such as Greece may actually need to worry about *too little* American engagement in areas of continued national concern such as the Balkans and the Aegean, as Washington focuses on requirements further east.

Third, transatlantic policy toward Turkey, and Turkey's own evolution, will be extremely important factors in shaping the security environment in the eastern Mediterranean and its hinterlands over the next decade. If Turkey continues to converge with Europe, policymakers can anticipate a progressive Europeanization of Turkish foreign and security policy, although Ankara will retain the potential for independent action in the Middle East, where the country's internal security interests are most closely engaged. A more nationalistic and inward looking Turkey – possibly alongside a more nationalistic and inward-looking Europe -- will be a problematic security partner for the U.S., and a more uncomfortable neighbor for Greece.

Fourth, developments in the Aegean still matter. Greek-Turkish detente has transformed the security environment in the eastern Mediterranean in important ways. The consolidation and extension of this detente in light of possibly wide ranging scenarios for the future of Europe and Turkey, is a strategic imperative for the region, and in transatlantic terms. Greek-Turkish relations have acquired a wider European context, but policies set in Athens can still have an important influence on Turkish security perceptions and Aegean stability. Priority should be given to renewed Greek-Turkish dialogue on outstanding disputes in the Aegean – few predictable advantages are likely to accrue to either side from attempts to "game" the timing of negotiations and progress in Turkey's EU accession. Confidence

building and disengagement will be essential across a wide range of possible Turkey-EU scenarios.

Fifth, the next decade could well see new, transforming developments – both positive and negative. A comprehensive settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, and the successful emergence of a Palestinian state would dramatically alter the strategic landscape and open new possibilities for security cooperation, possibly as an extension of Euro-Atlantic arrangements, rather than through new Middle Eastern institutions. On the negative side of the ledger, it is possible that the next decade will see the emergence of one or more new nuclear powers in the neighborhood of the eastern Mediterranean, posing entirely new challenges for security and strategy. Regional as well as extra-regional actors will need to consider the circumstances under which they might – or might not – “live with” new nuclear arsenals on Europe’s periphery, and the strategic adjustments that might be required.

Finally, security in the eastern Mediterranean, like societies around the region, has been globalized in important respects. The range of state and non-state actors affecting regional security directly or indirectly is now much wider. In the past, Russia and the U.S. were the only significant over-the-horizon players in Mediterranean security. Today, China, India and others are part of the equation via energy ties, information flows, investment, and arms and technology transfers. In a way that has not been seen since the end of the Cold War, regional reference points are necessary, but no longer sufficient for the eastern Mediterranean strategist.



