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## SOUTHERN CHALLENGES AND THE REGIONALIZATION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

EDITED BY ALEXANDRA DE HOOP SCHEFFER, MARTIN MICHELOT AND  
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# Introduction

Recent security developments in the European southern neighborhood seem not to have questioned the objectives and methods of the transatlantic security partnership. The overbearing legacies of the Iraq invasion, the 2011 Libyan intervention and the ongoing conflict in Syria, have framed — and will continue to frame — transatlantic discussions on out-of-area military operations. The geopolitical upheaval stemming from the “Arab Spring” has reshuffled the traditional understanding of the regional balance of power, while the political situations in Turkey, Israel, and Lebanon are also subjects of concern for transatlantic partners. Instability and insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have had direct effects on European and U.S. societies. The threat of Islamist terrorism has increasingly spread beyond the Mediterranean, and millions of migrants fleeing the dangers of the region have led to a still unresolved refugee crisis in Europe, with unclear political implications.

Facing this multiplicity of crises and issues, transatlantic powers have often failed to adopt a proactive approach, and the case-by-case reactions have shown various degrees of success. The United States and its European partners remain highly reluctant to directly intervene in the security crises in the MENA. Reliance on regional partners has not delivered desirable outcomes so far, and transatlantic partners are in need to redefine the scope of their strategy of outsourcing. The discussions at the next NATO Summit in 2017 should provide the basis for a necessary rethinking. If not, the future of crisis management in the region will be handled by powers like Russia, Iran and Turkey, along the model of the Syrian crisis, leaving the United States and Europe on the side-lines, as the countries seek to drive the conflict in ways that serve their interests and spheres of influence.

Constructive transatlantic cooperation can only emerge if transatlantic partners share a common understanding of the changing and complex security environment of the MENA. Despite objective efforts in the last two years in order to improve the exchange of information, further improvements remain necessary in order to design an efficient transatlantic strategy towards the Southern security challenges. Transatlantic partners and NATO have to continue joint efforts in order to address more specifically three key issues.

Firstly, they need to move beyond the so-called concept of the “Southern flank,” which is problematic in itself. Indeed, it may appear pertinent to distinguish, in theory, security challenges in the Mediterranean neighborhood from those in the Eastern neighborhood. But

in fact, they both combine conventional and non-conventional challenges for Europe’s security and political integrity. Russia’s comprehensive use of its power (military force, cyber inference, destabilization of social and energy networks) is directly threatening the existence of European and NATO countries, while the spillover effects caused by failing states and terrorism in the Middle East and Africa — as in the case of the refugee crisis and foreign fighters — constitute an existential threat for political systems and national security. These threats should be addressed through a NATO–EU comprehensive approach, based on a pragmatic division of labor between both institutions

Indeed, the artificial distinction between the South and the East has only lead to further regional fragmentation within the transatlantic partnership since 2014. The challenges stemming from crises in the Southern neighborhood are a reminder of the security ecosystem in which transatlantic powers operate. Rather than

opposing the two “flanks,” the transatlantic narrative should highlight the constant linkage between the different threats. It is in the interest of all transatlantic partners to reinforce the security of their neighbors, and not only focus on the security of the transatlantic territory. Although NATO no longer aims at a “360 vision,” all 28 allies are necessary

to face both Eastern and Southern issues. It also requires a more proactive understanding of the neighbors’ needs and factors of instability. For instance, the migration crisis affecting Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon cannot be overlooked, as it already weakens these societies and could eventually create a new political turmoil with security implications for Europe.

Secondly, despite a more accurate perception of the threat, transatlantic partners have yet to overcome a form of strategic helplessness. The blockages are not security-related, but rather political (rise of populism, identity politics), and economic (budget constraints). Transatlantic partners are aware of their divergences and of the reality of the risks that are faced, but still need to engage in some necessary efforts, especially in terms of defense spending. The difficulty to translate the perceptible progress into policy-making also stems from the lessons-learned from past operations. Recent cooperation in the MENA region cannot provide credible models for partnerships with non-transatlantic powers. The

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***The next NATO Summit in 2017 should provide the basis for a necessary rethinking.”***

# Introduction

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conflict in Yemen has illustrated the failure of a division of labor with regional partners. The idea that transatlantic countries could command while regional actors operate on the field is an illusion. Similarly, a Libya-scenario seems unrealistic in the near future, and the election of Donald Trump may increase the resistance to any transatlantic intervention in the region. Trump has been very critical of the 2011 Libyan operation, and his anti-Islam rhetoric during the campaign will durably affect the regional perceptions of the United States.

Finally, transatlantic partners have to recalibrate their objectives and priorities rather than invent a new transatlantic project in the MENA. The *raison d'être* of the Alliance and the tools available to project power are known and unquestioned. The general sense of confusion and helplessness could lead to a dangerous overestimation of what is necessary to defend transatlantic interests. The transatlantic security partnership does not need to create a new theology, but needs to fix what does not work anymore in the operationalization process. Recalibrating the strategic ambitions in the Southern flank — that is, agreeing on a more realistic set of objectives — requires political leadership and willingness to collaborate, which may be more difficult in the current political environment in the United States and in Europe. It is however paramount to translate common perceptions and interests into a practical roadmap, with workable goals.

Getting rid of irrelevant historical analogies could be a first step in that direction. The success-stories of Central and Eastern European countries during the post-Cold War era are often still used as strategic guidelines in the very different geopolitical context of the MENA region. The examples of the integration of former communist countries into the European project are not relevant to define the strategy in the Southern flank, and set too ambitious objectives for transatlantic partners. Similarly, the Yugoslav wars and the reconstruction of Bosnian and Croatian societies do not necessarily provide helpful models for future initiatives in other strategic environments. Recalibrating NATO's objectives means to accept the singularity and specificity of the crises faced in the MENA. Historical references, often misused, have fostered false expectations on the transformative power of transatlantic powers, and consequently created ill-designed objectives in European neighborhoods. The following pieces provide policy-relevant and complementary perspectives on the challenges faced by NATO in the region. The authors present different priorities

for transatlantic partners, both in order to stop inefficient or counter-productive ongoing initiatives and mindsets, and to design new approaches. The final focus on the Libyan case presents an up-to-date analysis of the situation, and provides the keys to understand the obstacles preventing NATO allies from transforming the military victory into a strategic success.

# NATO's Middle East Partnership Policy after the Warsaw Summit: Time for a Realistic Agenda?

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**In Brief:** The failure of the institutional and multilateral frameworks under which NATO strive to collaborate with MENA countries has been evidenced by their substitution for ad hoc and bilateral cooperation, seen as better fitting partners' interests, and by the diverging security amongst NATO's allies and between NATO and regional partners. Forging a forum for dialogue to make interests between NATO and MENA countries converge could be a remedy to these stumbling partnerships, with NATO concurrently providing defense training to some of its regional partners, as it did in Iraq, to compensate for their inability to operate militarily, and to make the "division of labor" in crisis management realistic.

Despite the European media frenzy over the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), Middle Eastern issues were not at the forefront of NATO's latest Summit in Warsaw. First, the choice of the Polish capital indicated the Alliance's intention to reassure Eastern European members in light of Russian assertiveness following the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Second, the Summit was heavily influenced by the fallouts of the United Kingdom referendum on its EU membership and its meaning for European cohesion. Finally, the Summit itself was not a turning point for NATO but rather, to use Julian Lindley-French's expression, a "reviewing summit" following up on major initiatives launched at the previous Summit in Wales.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these preliminary caveats, it is worth exploring the current state of NATO's Middle East partnerships, namely the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Although nothing much changed in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative since their creation, the regional security environment dramatically worsened. As evidenced by the wave of terrorist attacks in NATO countries over the last months, IS — and Al Qaeda — are likely to remain a significant threat for the Alliance. Additionally, the migrant issue engendered by the humanitarian crisis in Syria causes major disputes among allies regarding the burden of hosting refugees. It also prompted a rather significant new NATO maritime activity in the Aegean Sea.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, the Iranian conundrum is far from being solved. Although Europeans and Americans reached a temporary diplomatic agreement in 2015 with the signature of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Tehran's compliance is to be tested. The deal strictly discussed Iran's nuclear program and excluded the

<sup>1</sup> Julian Lindley-French, "The Warsaw Summit and the NATO Christmas Tree," Carnegie Europe, 11 July 2016. Available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=64052>

<sup>2</sup> Andreas Jacobs, "In Troubled Waters: NATO's New Maritime Activity in the Aegean", NDC Research Report, March 2016.

growth of its ballistic arsenal — which remains one of the most advanced in the region — and its interference in foreign conflicts (Syria, Iraq, or Yemen). These developments not only mean that NATO's integrated air and missile defense shall remain an important mission but also that planners in the headquarters and the operational commands will need to factor Iranian influence in local crisis.

Against that backdrop, allies and partners urgently need to reassess the relevance of the MD and the ICI. Stakeholders acknowledge that they did not deliver as expected but because of obstacles seen as inextricable, nothing in their format significantly changed. In this paper, we suggest not to ignore the obstacles but to candidly discuss them and to refocus the partnerships on two pillars: political consultations through the establishment of a NATO-Middle East strategic dialogue and military cooperation via the reinforcement of NATO defense education and training programs.

## Overcoming the Institutional Constraints

The first issue relates to the format of the partnerships. NATO's partnership policies remain constrained by two primary vehicles created in a very different international environment: the MD and the ICI. Born in 1994, the MD was supposed to leverage the peace momentum brought about by the Oslo Accords to foster cooperation between NATO, Arab countries (Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Mauritania) and Israel. However, the unravelling of the peace process and the several rounds of conflict between Israel and Palestinian factions (2008, 2012, 2014) suspended NATO's initial ambitions.

Concerning the ICI, the assumption at its birth in 2004 was that the political realm of the partnership would not suffer the same obstacles that the MD had encountered. The environment seemed much more favorable to cooperation as there was no issue among the partners as contentious as the Israeli-Arab issue. However, Saudi Arabia and Oman declined to be part of the ICI. Both agreed to participate in some activities but refrained from institutionalizing their relations with NATO. The Alliance obviously had difficulty playing a role in the region without engaging the rulers in Riyadh.

The second obstacle to the advancement of the ICI was the failure to “multilateralize” its process. Saudi Arabia and Oman aside, those Gulf countries that joined the ICI (Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain) expressed their preference for a

bilateral framework, rather than a multilateral one (like the MD). They wanted to engage with NATO but on their own, not side by side.

In both cases, these institutional shortcomings prevented further rapprochement. As a result, partner nations and NATO members sometimes bypassed these partnerships to cooperate effectively. For instance, the contribution of some MD and ICI members to NATO Operation Unified Protector in 2011 occurred not because of the partnerships but in spite of them. It was decided on an ad hoc basis and implicitly dismissed the MD and ICI as irrelevant frameworks.

## Coping with Competing Priorities

Reforming bureaucracy may be a difficult challenge but not as big as finding a common ground between allies and partners on the priorities to address in the region. This is an issue not only between NATO and its regional partners but also among NATO members themselves.

As evidenced by the Warsaw Summit Communique, the Eastern flank remains the cornerstone of NATO's military efforts. The reassurance measures, both at diplomatic and military levels, addressed to Eastern European and Baltic States

“ **The Eastern flank remains the cornerstone of NATO's military efforts.** ”

underline where the resources go. True, the heads of state decided at Warsaw that NATO's AWACS surveillance aircraft will support the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS. But this does not equal the level of engagement in the East. For some of NATO allies, there is only one existential threat to the Alliance: Russia. In that perspective, Moscow's policies vis-à-vis its neighboring countries should drive NATO's posture.

But for countries like France, NATO's Middle East policy is irrelevant because of the Alliance's limited diplomatic skills. Paris traditionally considers the Alliance's post-Cold War partnerships as failed attempts to find new missions for the organization. In this view, NATO should focus on its initial purpose — defending its territories — rather than engaging with Arab countries.

Still, allies like Italy and Turkey support NATO's commitment to the Southern flank. Each has its own geographical bias: Italy pushes for an active role in the Mediterranean to contain the Libyan crisis, while Turkey called on NATO to defend its southern border with Syria through the deployment of Patriot missile batteries in the area starting in 2013. But this also meant that the MD is at the mercy of Turkish Middle East agenda, as seen with the effects of Ankara's tensions with Israel and Egypt.

NATO's partners also have very different views on the priorities to put on the agenda. Countries like Algeria and Mauritania look to NATO for lessons on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency to help them facing the immediate threats posed by organizations like Boko Haram, Al Qaeda and ISIS. Gulf partners on the other side push NATO to be more active on the Iranian file and maritime security. Meanwhile, Jordanian officials see the Palestinian issue as their most pressing challenge.

The combination of all these diverging views, both between NATO allies and with partners, impeded the reinforcement of the partnership. Added to the shortcoming of the institutional framework, this generated frustration among policymakers on both sides. As one Kuwaiti high official told us, "it is a partnership without a cause."<sup>3</sup>

## Defining a Realistic Agenda for Partnership

Recognizing these pitfalls is a necessary process if one wants to improve NATO relations with its Middle East partners. Although today's security environment is different from the days when the MD and ICI were created, there is an even more critical need for multinational cooperation. Under these circumstances, the Alliance should build upon two pillars: using NATO as a collective security forum and strengthening its role as a defense education and training provider.

### *NATO as a collective security forum*

NATO's core strength remains its ability to plan and conduct multinational security consultations. It is not always understood by partners but the Alliance is less a policymaker than a policy-convenor. It enables the member countries and partner nations to meet and exchange, a rare currency in the

diplomatic world. For instance, on December 3rd, 2014, NATO hosted the first meeting between the foreign ministers from the countries forming the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS. Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, attended the meeting as an observer and NATO "only provided the building" according to participants.<sup>4</sup> The argument was a simple one: there was no other organization able to host so many diplomatic and military representatives in a secured area. This anecdote reveals a reality of international consultations: NATO constitutes today a unique platform for strategic consultations. It is not only a logistical matter but a diplomatic one. There is no other place where British, French, and American navies could discuss maritime security in the Gulf altogether with their counterparts from the region. Likewise, Mauritanian officers would rarely share counterterrorism experiences with Algerians, Moroccans, Italians, and Frenchmen in a different setting.

“ *The ability of Middle East militaries to engage in ambitious interventions is limited.* ”

NATO Secretariat should therefore recast its diplomatic ambition. Although there have been many official meetings (at ministerial level, ambassadorial level, or the level of chiefs of defense), there has not been a proper strategic dialogue in the same way bilateral relations operate. This dialogue should be developed on a regular basis between allies and partners. It could bring together ministers and chiefs of defense from both sides to discuss a common multilateral agenda, while bilateral meetings could be arranged on the side-lines of the dialogue. This NATO-MENA strategic dialogue should not be designed as a classic, very formal and official gathering but as a platform to exchange fresh ideas and promote future cooperation. It could be inspired by the experience gained from second-track fora like the existing Manama Dialogue for the Gulf countries or the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. The content could include maritime security, countering security vacuums in the Middle East, counter proliferation. A dialogue would not stumble on the competing priorities we described earlier but instead address them, and would create a platform for stakeholders to keep their communications open. In the long run, a dialogue of this kind could also provide a framework to discuss ongoing and potential crises in order for any party involved to share views with allies and partners to prevent further escalation.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with the author in Kuwait City, Spring 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Croft, "Ministers from coalition against Islamic State to meet December 3," Reuters, 26 November 2014.



## *NATO as a defense education and training provider*

The second pillar for NATO policies in the Middle East relates to its experience in the field of multinational military education and training. The NATO School in Oberammergau (Germany) and the NATO Defense College in Rome (Italy) play primary roles to that purpose but there are many other initiatives open to partners: the Defense Education Enhancement Program,<sup>5</sup> ad hoc training teams deployed by the Allied Command for Transformation. Focusing on military education and training is a realistic objective given the vast disparities among the armed forces of partner countries in terms of expenditures, force structure, and military readiness.

This implies abandoning the misleading, and delusional, concept of division of labor between NATO and its partners. The widely spread idea of a better division of labor between Western countries and Middle East partners in regional conflicts is a convenient narrative but it misses an operational reality: for the most part, local forces would not be able to replace NATO militaries in crisis management. True, Jordan and the UAE coordinated their efforts with NATO during Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011. True, the Saudi-led operation in Yemen starting in 2015 indicates a new phase in the ability of regional actors to intervene in crisis. But partners' contribution to OUP remained overall limited at the operational level — though it diplomatically strengthened NATO's legitimacy. Additionally, the supporting role played by the United States in the GCC war efforts in Yemen (special forces assistance, provision of intelligence, and logistical capabilities) indicates that the time for a natural division of labor is not yet ripe. Officially, interoperability remains a primary objective of NATO partnerships but apart from a few countries (Jordan, Israel, UAE), the ability of Middle East militaries to engage in ambitious interventions is limited.

This only reemphasizes the added value of NATO as a defense education and training provider. This is evidenced by the enduring interest of Middle East partners for the various activities (exercises, courses) offered by NATO structures. The Alliance also played a major role in the case of countries like Iraq where the NATO Training Mission (NTM-I) trained 9,000 Iraqi Federal Police, 2,500 Iraqi officers, 200 senior non-commissioned officers between 2008 and 2011. It sent over 1,800 members of Iraq's security

forces to out-of-country training courses.<sup>6</sup> After the U.S. withdrawal, NTM-I turned into a small coordination cell with occasional courses offered to the Iraqi National Security Council and the Iraqi National Defense University. Following the fall of Mosul in June 2014, NATO paused all major cooperation activities until April 2016, when it was decided to relocate the training of Iraqi officers to Jordan.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, the Warsaw Summit Communique stated that NATO “decided to respond positively to the May 5, 2016 request of the prime minister of Iraq and agree to provide in-country NATO training to Iraqi security and military forces, in agreed areas.”<sup>8</sup> One could argue that NTM-I did not prevent the shortcomings of the Iraqi forces when they faced ISIS in the short battle of Mosul in 2014. But on the long term, this NATO contribution could help to anchor the country in a stable regional environment and in particular, it could facilitate Iraq's future cooperation with ICI partners. This shows that in the vast array of initiatives NATO has launched with and for its partners, the field of training and education is the most promising.

## Conclusion

The MD and the ICI sometimes lost track of their initial objectives and seemed disconnected from the most pressing challenges facing the region. Because of the issues covered above (bureaucratic inertia, competing policy priorities), there is a critical need to reenergize these initiatives. Although it goes against the usual tendency of governments, a failing strategy cannot be saved by adding new goals and by being more ambitious about them. Instead, policymakers should identify the specific assets of NATO and build on them. Consequently, this paper recommends to put efforts on two pillars:

1. The conduct of a NATO Middle East strategic dialogue. This would help revise and reinforce the political agenda of the partnerships and build channels to address disagreements among allies and partners;

<sup>6</sup> See Florence Gaub, “Building a new military? The NATO Training Mission-Iraq,” Research Paper No.67, NATO Defense College, April 2011.

<sup>7</sup> These activities take place under the framework of a NATO-Iraq agreement of August 2015 regarding the Defence and Related Security Capability Building Initiative launched at the Wales Summit in 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016. Paragraph 95. Available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm). Accessed on 15th of August 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Jean d'Andurain, Alan Stolberg, “Defense Education Enhancement Program: The NATO Functional Clearing-House on Defense Education”, *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, vol. 11, n° 4, p.53-58 (2012).

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2. The expansion of defense education and training missions. This largely underestimated domain may be the most successful one for NATO's engagement with its partners. The Alliance has unique experience in the field of multinational training which, given the international context, will remain a key requirement for the militaries. As Middle Eastern armed forces remain customers, rather than providers, it is in this specific niche that the Atlantic Alliance can make a difference

These two pillars do not require major new funding but they could potentially reposition the partnerships of the Alliance to better address the security challenges in the region.

Beyond this revamping of NATO's partnerships, two issues should simultaneously be given serious consideration. First, NATO should internally work on the formulation of a clear defense policy for the Southern flank: defining the area, identifying the threats, exploring potential scenarios and evaluating the required resources. Second, NATO decision-makers should reflect on the long-term outcome of training initiatives for its partners and the impact on the "division of labor" narrative. We often assume that under this framework, regional partners would share the burden of intervention in crisis but that this would not challenge Western influence or command of the security environment. This is denying the fact that the more partners get operationally capable, the more assertive they will come to be regarding their security agenda, and the less likely they will be to purely accept NATO's terms without bargaining their own interests. This phenomenon will eventually redefine the dynamics of partnerships such as the MD and the ICI.

## **Biography**

Jean-Loup Samaan is an associate professor of strategic studies at the UAE National Defense College, Abu Dhabi. He was a lecturer and researcher with the NATO Defense College from 2011 to 2015. The views expressed in this article are his alone. They do not reflect the views of the National Defense College, Abu Dhabi, or the government of the United Arab Emirates.

From 2008 to 2011, he was a policy advisor at the French Ministry of Defense, where he was responsible for several net assessment studies covering transatlantic and Middle Eastern affairs. During that time, he was also an adjunct lecturer in strategic studies at the French Institute for Political Studies, Sciences Po.

# NATO and its Middle East and Mediterranean Partners: Taking NATO's Role in its Southern Flank to a New Strategic Level

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**In Brief:** NATO's partnerships with countries from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have mostly consisted so far in convening and reaching out to the region's elites and officials to improve cooperation between these MENA states and a transatlantic alliance some fear might still be perceived as the "West armed-wing." The 2011 international intervention in Libya as well as the Alliance's growing interest in securing both European frontiers and the Mediterranean Basin from Russian military build-up and the expansion of the self-proclaimed Islamic State have provided ground to go beyond public diplomacy with NATO's regional partners.

## NATO's Engagement in the Mediterranean and the Middle East: Mixed Outcomes

For more than two decades, NATO has engaged Mediterranean and Middle East partners in varying formats and with mixed results. Apart from the relatively short 2011 operation in Libya, NATO did not assume a strategic role in the region. Although the NATO-led operation in Libya was rightfully hailed in terms of involving four regional partners of NATO — UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and Morocco — there was little lasting impact of this operation as far as it concerned the strategic role of the Alliance in the region and its collaboration with regional partners.

Furthermore, NATO's two regional networks — the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) — did not deliver regional multilateral cooperation. Since its inception in 2004, ICI was essentially bilateral. Contrarily, the first decade of the MD (1994-2004) was predominantly multilateral and only after the introduction of bilateral programs in 2006, MD's multilateral dimension gradually became less significant.

Over the past decade, one can note a descent in both the frequency and participants' seniority in NATO's MD multilateral activities in the region. There has been no ministerial meeting of MD partners since 2008 and not all partners send their chiefs of defense for the annual meeting of NATO's chiefs of defense with their Mediterranean counterparts. NATO chose to mark the MD's 20th anniversary

in 2014 by convening the North Atlantic Council with the MD partners — all at ambassadorial level. Nonetheless, by providing legitimacy to bilateral advances in NATO's relations with specific MD and ICI partners, the multilateral frameworks retain significant relevance.

More recently, and since the Chicago Summit, NATO has invited heads of government and relevant ministerial participation from NATO's regional partners to ad hoc meetings with all partners contributing “boots on the ground” and other relevant assets to NATO operations — be it Afghanistan or Libya. Furthermore, NATO and its Mediterranean and Middle East partners have engaged in countless activities and cooperation opportunities, most of which are held at working levels. Although they do not earn media and public attention, the menu of collaborative activities is on the rise with a recent focus on interoperability and defense capability building. Following a fresh approach to partnerships outlined in the 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO's 2011 new partnership policy enabled the quantitative and qualitative expansion of NATO's partnerships menu of activities for MD and ICI countries.

## Addressing NATO's Inhibitions

More Many factors have contributed to the limited impact of the Alliance in the region in the past two decades. Arguably, two notable factors inhibited NATO's regional role. First, nearly from the onset of NATO's outreach to the region, the Alliance appeared timid in its approach, conscious, if not overly conscious, of pre-existing negative perceptions of the Arab World vis-à-vis the Alliance and the West and related sensitivities to Israeli-Arab relations. When NATO was considered to replace the ineffective UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon during the 2006 War, French President Chirac all but squashed the idea contending: “Whether we like it or not, NATO is perceived as the armed wing of the West in these regions, and as a result, in terms of image, NATO is not intended for this.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the support of the Arab League and the expressed willingness of four regional NATO partners to contribute to NATO's operation in Libya were instrumental in convincing allies to approve the operation.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the day, the operation in Libya demonstrated that NATO can operate in the region irrespective of pre-existing negative perceptions. Another

9 “Leaders Agree on Peacekeepers”, UPI, July 27, 2006 <http://www.upi.com/UPI-NewsTrack-TopNews/75911154033375/> [retrieved September 24, 2016].

10 Ivo H. Daadler and James G. Stavridis, “NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2012, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2012-02-02/natos-victory-libya> [retrieved September 24, 2016].

useful illustration of regional perceptions of NATO is the repeated proposals of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to deploy NATO forces following an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.<sup>11</sup> Arguably, and at least in some cases, Arab leaders have less inhibitions regarding working with NATO than some Western leaders appear to believe.

The second factor that limited NATO's outreach to the region was not unrelated to the allies' caution regarding the region — NATO had never articulated a strategy for its regional engagement. To date, there is no explicit definition of how NATO could concretely contribute to regional security, specifically of its role and added strategic value. Obviously, any attempt to delineate a regional strategy for the Middle East is a daunting task and this is particularly true for an Alliance that its core mission is the collective defense of Europe and North America.

Furthermore, addressing the root causes for the security challenges emanating from the Middle East — the regional socio-economic under-development — is not within the competency of NATO.<sup>12</sup> In other terms, without alleviating the socio-economic conditions, NATO alone can only offer symptomatic answers — enhance security, but not ultimately resolve the security challenges.<sup>13</sup> This understanding however, does not belittle the potential strategic role of NATO in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. Rather, attaining even modest progress in advancing regional development is a decade-long (if not more) undertaking that cannot show results without enhancing regional security in the short run. However,

**“ The operation in Libya demonstrated that NATO can operate in the region irrespective of pre-existing negative perceptions.”**

11 Tommy Steiner, “Could Jimmy Replace Moshe?” *Jerusalem Report*, February 19, 2014, pp. 8-9, <http://www.jpost.com/Jerusalem-Report/Palestinian-Affairs/Could-Jimmy-replace-Moshe-341807> [retrieved: October 30, 2016].

12 Nicola de Santis, Remarks to the Session “Facing the Non-Military Instability Factors,” 61st General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA), Brussels, November 19, 2015, <http://atahq.org/2015/12/ata-61ga-mr-nicola-de-santis-facing-the-non-military-instability-factors/> [retrieved September 30, 2016].

13 On this point, see also Stefanie Babst, “Bad Neighborhood,” *Berlin Policy Journal*, May/June 2016, <http://berlinpolicyjournal.com/bad-neighborhood/> [retrieved September 30, 2016].

to chart a possible strategic course for NATO in the region, allies will need to frankly address and resolve their different threat perceptions and strategic priorities.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, without a strategy for its engagement in the Middle East and Mediterranean, NATO's regional dialogue and cooperation frameworks became an end in themselves,<sup>15</sup> even if their persistence was not without merit and required ongoing diplomatic maintenance. Against this backdrop, one can appreciate the limited strategic footprint of NATO in the region and the insofar limited contribution of the partners to the Alliance. Thus, the anticipation that NATO could "outsource" security to regional partners is unwarranted.

NATO's preoccupation with issues of image and perceptions combined with a lack of a strategic vision of how the Alliance can address and contribute to Middle East security led to an extensive focus on public diplomacy in addition to official bilateral political dialogue. To be clear, NATO's public diplomacy activities in the region are an indispensable component of its past, present, and future engagement in the region. These activities focus mainly, though not exclusively, on reaching out to elite and opinion shapers in all NATO regional partners to allay anti-Western prejudices regarding NATO's "real" intentions and explain NATO's post-Cold War transformation, including its contribution to humanitarian and peace support operations. Activities include initiating public conferences and events in the region featuring top NATO officials, briefing and reaching out to local press and media, and hosting senior informal delegations for briefings at NATO headquarters.

Although one cannot accurately "measure" the impact of such public diplomacy activities, they have had an enabling effect on NATO's involvement in the Middle East and North Africa. Arguably, NATO's public diplomacy enabled the unprecedented support of the Arab League for having NATO lead the 2011 international military operation in Libya, including the significant contribution of four Arab NATO partners to the operation.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, and although

14 Some contend that intra-Alliance differences led to the limited involvement of NATO in the global coalition against ISIS. See, Andreas Jacobs and Jean-Loup Samaan, "Player at the Sidelines: NATO and the Fight Against ISIS," Research Paper No. 107, NATO Defense College, Rome, December 2014, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=750> [retrieved September 30, 2016]. A more recent analysis of the drafting process of the "Southern Flank" sections in NATO's Warsaw Summit communique suggests that the intra-alliance difference continue to plague the Alliance. See Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, "Beyond Deterrence: NATO's Agenda after Warsaw," *Facts and Findings: Prospects for German Foreign Policy*, No. 224, October 2016, <http://www.kas.de/wf/en/33.46589/> [retrieved: October 30, 2016].

15 Jean-Loup Samaan, "NATO in the Gulf: Partnership without a Cause," Research Paper No. 83, NATO Defense College, Rome, October 2012, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=438> [retrieved September 30, 2016].

16 Daadler and Stavridis, Op. cit.

this brief suggests that NATO moves beyond public diplomacy, should NATO enhance its strategic presence and engagement with its partners in the region, it should build upon, and further expand and bolster its public diplomacy outreach.

## NATO's Strategic Footprint in the Middle East: Leveraging the Growing Interest of Allies and Partners

Combined with NATO's extensive public diplomacy outreach, the recent advances in NATO's engagement with its partners — even at technical and working/senior officials level — could facilitate the emergence of NATO as a strategic actor in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. On May 4, NATO announced that Israel, Bahrain, and Kuwait will open an official mission at NATO Headquarters. NATO also announced that Jordan's embassy to Belgium will be accredited and serve as the Kingdom's official mission to NATO. Ambassadors of the four nations have been officially credentialed as their countries' representatives to NATO. This advance is by no means insignificant and extends beyond the important diplomatic symbolism. There is no doubt that even the rather modest staff presence and office space of these new missions creates new opportunities for cooperation and exchange. The accredited envoys will allow streamlining and enhancing defense and intelligence cooperation and exchange between the four partners and NATO — and in that respect, all four have much to offer and to benefit.

Similarly, the upcoming inauguration of NATO's ICI Regional Center in Kuwait will also serve to enhance NATO's cooperation and exchange with its Arab Gulf partners. According to the agreement between NATO and Kuwait, the mission of the new Center will be to facilitate cooperation and serve as a link between the Alliance and the Gulf that will allow each to share expertise and increase mutual understanding.

Indeed, the opening of official missions by several Mediterranean and Middle Eastern partners and the opening of a formal NATO presence in the Middle East are important milestones. Adopted at a 2011 Ministerial meeting, NATO's New Partnership Policy offered all partners the possibility of a formal partnership. The policy offered partners to pursue an individual relationship shaped by the interests of the Alliance and the respective

interests of each partner country. The new policy however, was not fully implemented because Turkey had indicated that it would veto any partnership program that would include Israel. NATO was unwilling to move ahead with its other partners in the region and leave Israel behind. The simultaneous announcement of the new Middle East missions at NATO was made possible only after the removal of the Turkish silent veto on Israel's mission.<sup>17</sup>

However, a resurgent Russia and the growing threat of ISIS in the run-up towards the 2014 Wales Summit increased NATO's interest in partnerships, including Middle Eastern partners. At the Wales Summit, NATO designated five of its 41 partners as "enhanced opportunities partners" — one of which was Jordan. The five partners would hold closer political dialogue with NATO, gain more access to NATO's exercises and expertise, and increase their military interoperability with NATO's forces. Subsequently, NATO invited additional partners to join an offshoot of this initiative — the Interoperability Platform (IP). Essentially, the IP is a flexible forum bringing together allies and partners to examine a broad range of issues regarding interoperability for future crisis management — from command and control, through education and training, onto exercises and logistics. Several regional partners have signed up: Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and the UAE. With the resolution of the Turkish-Israeli dispute, Israel's participation is currently under consideration.

Aside of these institutional developments, NATO is "looking" to its Southern flank more earnestly in the past two years. The inflow of thousands of asylum-seekers/refugees into Europe and the wave of radical Islamist terror provided a profound appreciation to the notion that European security is inseparable of Middle East security. Although Russia received most of the attention at the Warsaw Summit, the southern flank was not neglected. In their joint communique, the allies declared that ISIS "now represents an immediate and direct threat" to NATO members and to the international community.<sup>18</sup> Allies announced new capacity building missions for Iraq and Tunisia and, perhaps more importantly, the launch of a new maritime security operation in the Mediterranean — Operation Sea Guardian.

17 Tommy Steiner, "Broadband Diplomacy and the NATO-Israel Advance," *inFocus*, Fall 2016 <https://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/2016/09/28/broadband-diplomacy-nato-israel-advance/> [retrieved September 24, 2016].

18 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Warsaw Summit Communique," July 9, 2016, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm) [retrieved September 24, 2016].

Important as they may be, these new missions alone will not transform NATO into a strategic actor in the region. Arguably, providing defense capability building in the Middle East is important, but in itself, reflects a rather low level of ambition.<sup>19</sup> The new maritime operation however, could be an important building block for expanding NATO's engagement with regional partners and bolstering its strategic imprint in the region.

Notably, several NATO partners in the Mediterranean and the Middle East have expressed considerable interest — mostly privately — in exploring a strategic role for NATO in the region. For several years, reports suggest that Saudi Arabia is actively considering joining the ICI — in itself an important boost to NATO's relations in the Middle East.<sup>20</sup> A formal NATO-GCC partnership was discussed by U.S. and Gulf officials in April 2016 — in the run-up to the conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal.<sup>21</sup> Another proposal was to hold ministerial level meetings raising the public and political profile of NATO's engagement in the region.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, most if not all regional partners could concretely contribute to NATO's missions in the region and even beyond — for instance in counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and in the Israeli case, to NATO's work on cyber-security. The growing interest among regional actors runs in parallel to attempts at institutionalizing regional military and security cooperation even though this objective appears elusive at this point.<sup>23</sup> Both trends reflect an understanding among regional actors of the increasingly important regional dimension of their respective security challenges and that in addressing these challenges, a collective and multilateral effort would be more effective.

“ At the Wales Summit, NATO designated 5 of its 41 partners as enhanced opportunity partners.”

19 Corvaja, "Beyond Deterrence: NATO's Agenda after Warsaw," Op. cit.

20 Hany Beshr, "NATO and the Gulf: What Next?" February 3, 2015, <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/nato-and-gulf-what%E2%80%99s-next> [retrieved September 24, 2016].

21 Taimur Khan, "Kerry hints at possible GCC-NATO Security Partnership," *The National*, April 8, 2016, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/kerry-hints-at-possible-gcc-nato-security-partnership> [retrieved September 24, 2016]. See also, Middle East Briefing, "US-GCC: Another Step Towards NATO's Role in Gulf Security," April 28, 2016, <http://mebriefing.com/?p=2284> [retrieved: October 30, 2016].

22 Abdulaziz Sager, "NATO and the Future of Gulf Security," *Gulf News*, May 28, 2014, <http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/nato-and-the-future-of-gulf-security-1.1340193> [retrieved September 24, 2016].

23 Florence Gaub, *An Arab NATO in the Making? Middle Eastern Military Cooperation Since 2011* Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2016.

Consequently, the current dynamic strategic environment of persistent volatility and uncertainty is an elastic moment for shaping a new NATO role in the Middle East, preferably carried out in real joint authorship with NATO's MD and ICI partners collectively. Considering the decreasing strategic appetite of the United States in the Middle East and the domestic challenges facing the European Union, transatlantic partners should seriously consider working together to enhance security in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and to tackle common challenges along with their regional partners. Furthermore, the apparent enhancement of the informal strategic dialogue and cooperation among several key NATO partners in the Middle East, including Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and GCC members may suggest that the time is ripe for NATO to work with many of its partners to shape a more favorable regional security setting.<sup>24</sup>

While the Alliance is rightfully focused on the Russian resurgence and its implications for allies' collective security, the "Russia Factor" is becoming a serious challenge in NATO's "Southern flank" as well. The growing Russian military presence in the region, and particularly its maritime build-up in the Mediterranean and the deployment of advanced anti-aircraft defense systems in Syria, restricts NATO allies' freedom of action and navigation in the Mediterranean, and consequently, their ability to project and rapidly deploy forces across the Middle East. Thus, Russia's military deployment in Syria and in the Mediterranean Sea could well create a "collective security" challenge for NATO along its Southern flank. Therefore, transforming NATO into a strategic actor in the Mediterranean and the Middle East is particularly timely and increasingly essential for Transatlantic security.

Taking NATO's relations with its regional partners to a new level, however, will require a sustained effort to enhance its regional profile and formulate a strategic vision for NATO's role in the Middle East and its regional partnerships. In this undertaking, NATO ought not to do it alone; it should engage its partners more extensively and seriously and urge the partners to reciprocate. Simply, NATO should encourage regional partners to take up a place at the table in developing this new strategic vision. There are many ways to do so, but

“ **NATO is at a strategic juncture to offer added value to regional security along with its regional partners.** ”

a useful example is the process that led to the formulation of NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept. The yearlong process that was led by the group of experts chaired by Secretary Albright featured a series of seminars and conferences and encouraged the publication of countless policy papers and reports. One could envision a group of experts from both allied countries and NATO's regional partners attempting to authentically carry out the joint authorship of a NATO strategic concept for Mediterranean and the Middle East. Real joint authorship between NATO and its regional partners would undoubtedly enhance the perceived relevance of NATO in the region. This could create additional opportunities for having NATO's leadership visit the region more frequently and engage local elites, media, and leaders.

In addition, NATO's newly announced maritime security operation in the Mediterranean is a useful opportunity. The maritime dimension could become a key strategic benefit for NATO in the Middle East — for Mediterranean and Gulf partners alike. In designing this operation, NATO should explore opportunities to facilitate regional input. Such input should not be limited to strategize the most effective operation, but additionally seek tangible contributions — if not “boots on the ground” then “ships on the sea” — from the partner countries. In the past, Israel had offered to contribute naval assets to NATO's previous naval operation in the Mediterranean — Operation Active Endeavour. In designing the new maritime mission in the Mediterranean — Operation Sea Guardian — NATO and its partners could explore expanding the new mission's area of operation to the Red Sea and perhaps combine it with the limited assets assigned to NATO's anti-piracy mission, Operation Open Shield. Notably, and with current presence and activity of the so-called “Sinai Province” of ISIS, maritime security in the Red Sea is a common and important strategic interest with direct bearing on the energy security of both NATO allies and its Middle East partners.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, a meaningful Middle Eastern contribution to Operation Sea Guardian could create an opportunity for convening ministerial meetings of NATO with regional partners participating in the operation. This opportunity would further lend public and political credence to NATO's evolving strategic role in the region.

25 Israel's former representative to the EU and to NATO, Ambassador Oded Eran and the author raised in the past a similar proposal regarding NATO's potential maritime role in the region. See, Tommy Steiner and Oded Eran, NATO's New Strategic Concept and the Broader Middle East: A non-official Israeli Perspective and “Food for Thought”, Unpublished paper, April 2010, available at: [https://www.academia.edu/6520054/With\\_Oded\\_Eran\\_NATOs\\_New\\_Strategic\\_Concept\\_and\\_the\\_Broader\\_Middle\\_East\\_A\\_non-official\\_Israeli\\_Perspective\\_and\\_Food\\_for\\_Thought\\_](https://www.academia.edu/6520054/With_Oded_Eran_NATOs_New_Strategic_Concept_and_the_Broader_Middle_East_A_non-official_Israeli_Perspective_and_Food_for_Thought_) [retrieved September 24, 2016].

24 On the increasing strategic dialogue and cooperation between Arab Sunni countries and Israel, see Steiner, “Broadband Diplomacy and the NATO-Israeli Advance,” Op. cit.

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In sum, NATO and its allies hold an important opportunity to shape a strategic role for the Alliance in the Middle East. Based on the two-decade-long extensive diplomatic and public diplomacy outreach, NATO is at a strategic juncture to offer added value to regional security along with its regional partners. Considering the growing regional interest in NATO's activities and operations and the shifting sands of regional balances of interest, power and influence, taking NATO's strategic engagement in the Middle East to the next level might actually prove to be a low hanging fruit if only NATO allies overcome their inhibitions and different strategic preferences and priorities.

### **Biography**

Tommy Steiner is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, IDC Herzliya. At the Institute, Tommy works on various policy research projects focusing mainly on EU and NATO relations with Israel, the Mediterranean, and the broader Middle East. A member of the founding team of the Annual Herzliya Conference Series, Tommy managed the Conference series from 2007 through 2013 - a period during which the Herzliya Conference became considered one of the top international policy conferences. Concurrently, Tommy teaches International Relations and Security Studies at IDC's Lauder School of Government.



# Transatlantic Security Assistance in Fractured States: The Troubling Case of Libya

FREDERIC WEHREY

*CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE*

**In Brief:** However successful was the international coalition which ousted Libya's dictator of power in 2011, it has failed to translate into protracting security stability. The weakness of the Libyan military, evidenced in the wake of Muammar Qadhafi's removal, and the security gap it created, was offset by the rise of militias whose decentralized structure makes NATO's targeted assistance more difficult. The challenges NATO will face in Libya might endure as long as no political reconciliation is reached internally, and as long as local communities keep on thriving on illegal trafficking.

Nearly four years after the overthrow of Muammar Qadhafi, it is hard to recall the initial optimism and even euphoria that greeted Libya's revolution in 2011. It was violent to be sure, but it was not prolonged. The seven-month NATO campaign — accomplished without a single coalition loss of life — was thought to herald a new form of humanitarian intervention that privileged multilateralism and local actors.

The first half of 2012 seemed to bear these arguments out. The state was brittle, but relatively stable. Western embassies and businesses returned, civil society flourished, and oil rebounded to near-pre-war levels, around 1.6 million barrels per day, faster than anyone had expected. But the clearest marker of success for many was the parliamentary elections on July 7, 2012, which outside observers deemed transparent, fair and, with scattered exceptions, free from violence.

But all the while, the security sector remained unaddressed. Qadhafi had long marginalized the regular military, fearing its potential for coups, and instead concentrated power in a few elite security brigades commanded by his sons. After the revolution, the loyalist brigades and security services all but evaporated, and in their place stepped the multitude of militias.

In the years after the revolution, the militia ranks swelled and their power grew. They grabbed ministries, airports, armories, oil fields, and customs posts as economic spoils and political leverage. Bereft its own ability to police the country, the transitional government started diverting salaries to the militias, placing them under the loose authority of the ministries of interior and defense. But these ministries were themselves captured by competing political factions. In time, they used the militias to strong-arm and ultimately subvert the already dysfunctional parliament.

Various plans and initiatives by Libya's transatlantic allies all collapsed because the country lacked the institutional structure to absorb assistance and, perhaps more importantly, because political factions were themselves divided over the structure, composition, and purpose of the new security sector. Additionally, Libyans were deeply conflicted about the extent of Western and especially NATO assistance in the post-conflict period, desiring help but wanting to maintain ownership and sovereignty.

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and individual Western states all proposed and supported various plans for creating a new defense architecture ("Towards a Defense White Paper"), demobilizing the militias (the Libyan-led Warriors Affairs Commission), and forming a military body that would reconcile younger civilian revolutionaries with the older, regular army (the National Guard project). But Libya's divided elites often viewed these plans with suspicion, specifically a ploy by their factional rivals to advance their own interests in the security sector (which in some cases was true).

The worsening security environment also severely restricted the ability of outside actors to provide assistance. For example, the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Libya (EUBAM) trained Libyan civil society organizations and offered assistance in border control, rule of law, and communications. But its reach was limited by its small footprint, and it left the country when security deteriorated in 2014.

By mid-2013, then Prime Minister Ali Zeidan, realizing that the government was unable to protect even its own ministries or personnel, requested assistance in the form of training for a "general purpose force" from Britain, Turkey, Italy, and the United States. But Libyans never defined the purpose of this force and, at any rate, it lacked the institutional base to absorb the recruits who returned from the initial wave of training in Italy and Turkey — bases, armories, even payroll services were all under the control of militias. Libyan soldiers who completed the training were put on indefinite leave or melted back into their militias. Poor vetting also contributed

“ It is vital for Libyans to first reach political consensus and an agreed-upon roadmap for a “whole-of-government” approach to security sector assistance.”

to the program's collapse in the case of Britain. The United States never started the training, partly because the Libyan government never paid for it up front.

Taken in sum, these failures offer a number of lessons learned that should guide future assistance efforts by European states and the United States. Namely, it is vital for Libyans to first reach political consensus and an agreed-upon roadmap for a “whole-of-government” approach to security sector assistance that does not solely rely on training. Second, transatlantic allies must accept that Libya has entered into a phase of prolonged decentralization and localization. That means that any new security assistance must acknowledge and try to harness the authority of municipal- and provincial-level actors within the framework of a national-level architecture. Finally, any renewed assistance strategy must ensure that training (particularly on counter-terrorism) does not inadvertently sharpen Libya's divides or become “captured” by a particular faction, to be used against political rivals.

## Moving Forward: What Roles for NATO and the EU on Security Assistance in Libya?

The Libyan Political Agreement of December 2015 offered some hope for unity, but the government that agreement produced — the Government of National Accord (GNA) — has faced considerable challenges in extending its authority, even in the capital. In the east, the House of Representatives-allied faction under General Khalifa Hifter refuses to recognize it and recently seized oil facilities in the Sirte Basin, which account for over half of Libya's oil production. Meanwhile, a coalition of militias — mostly from the powerful city of Misrata and only loosely tied to the GNA — has eroded the self-proclaimed Islamic State in its bastion of Sirte. In Benghazi, Libyan National Army (LNA) forces under Hifter are also battling Islamic State fighters embedded in a coalition of local Islamist militias.

The immediate challenge is securing the fragile government in Tripoli. The proposed “Presidential Guard” is meant to do just that but, like the General Purpose Force (GPF), there are already questions about its scope and composition.

There is certainly a role for NATO to assist in this effort and others. In April 2016, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg pledged support for capacity building and defense institutional reform in Libya at the Defense Ministers Meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council. NATO has maintained a channel of communication over the past several months in regards to security reform, and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has met with Prime Minister Fayeze al Sarraj, the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Taha Siala, and other Libyan officials to discuss the security situation.

Beyond the Presidential Guard, one key area of NATO and European assistance is the creation of a gendarmerie-type structure, which would include the recruitment of locally-constituted units for policing, border control, counter-narcotics, and the protection of key infrastructure. Many Libyan security interlocutors have argued that such a force is more suited to Libya's security challenges than a conventional, national-level army.

### ***Migrant Operations***

Curtailling the flow of illegal migrants and tackling human traffic networks has emerged a key priority for the transatlantic alliance. Here again, though, outside assistance suffers from the absence of capacity and coherence on the Libyan side. Libyan coast guard operations remain beset by significant technical challenges, disconnected from central government authority, and are often linked to town-based militia brokers.

With the June 2016 extension of its anti-migrant smuggling mission, Operation SOPHIA, the EU requested for NATO to provide additional support, which was discussed at the Warsaw Summit on July 8 and July 9, 2016. The summit commended the political progress Libya has made since December 2015 and acknowledged the sole legitimacy of the GNA. In Article 93 of the summit's communique, it was agreed upon a "possible NATO role in the Central Mediterranean, to complement and/or, upon European Union request, support, as appropriate, the EU's Operation SOPHIA..." The communique detailed a role in the provision of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, as well as logistical support, by supporting the capacity building efforts for the Libyan coastguard and navy.

NATO responded to the mandate's extension and the Warsaw Summit with the launch of a new maritime security operation, known as Operation Sea Guardian on July 14, 2016. The key responsibilities of the heightened efforts included countering trafficking and terrorism, providing

situational awareness, and allowing for ships to travel freely in a way that also strengthened the regional capacity. NATO again pledged close cooperation with the EU's Operation SOPHIA with a focus on eradicating international human trafficking.

### ***Border Assistance***

EUBAM, located in Tunis since August 2014, recently extended its mandate until August 2017 to "plan for a possible future EU mission providing advice and capacity-building in the area of criminal justice, migration, border security and counter-terrorism."

From recent visits to southern and southwest Libya, it is hard to overstate the challenges it will face in assisting Libyan actors in securing the country's porous frontiers. Here again, the long term solution is not simply one of technical and bureaucratic assistance but political reconciliation and, perhaps most importantly, shifting the local economies of Tuareg and Tabu communities away from a long-time dependence on the illicit smuggling of goods, weapons, narcotics and people.

### ***Biography***

Frederic Wehrey is a senior associate in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He specializes in security affairs, civil-military relations, and identity politics, with a focus on North Africa and the Gulf. Wehrey has served as a field consultant on southern Libya for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and an advisor for Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) in Baghdad on post-surge challenges.

Prior to joining Carnegie, he was a senior policy analyst at the RAND Corporation. Wehrey is also a twenty-year veteran of the active and reserve components of the U.S. Air Force, with tours across North Africa and the Middle East. He holds a doctorate in International Relations from Oxford University and a Master's in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University. He studied Arabic at Cairo University, the University of Jordan, and the Yemen Language Center in Sana'a.

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