FULL REPORT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Background

Both of the core researchers have a long experience of Mediterranean security issues. Claire Spencer set up the Mediterranean Security Programme at the Centre for Defence Studies in 1995, and has been head of the programme ever since. She has published widely on the Mediterranean and on security issues.

In the period prior to the project, Richard Gillespie produced a book-length monograph on Spain’s involvement in the Mediterranean (Macmillan, 2000). His research of Spanish Mediterranean policy led increasingly to a focus on the EMP, particularly its political/security agenda. This produced a parallel research project funded by the EU, ‘The EU and Democracy Promotion: The Case of North Africa’.

Objectives

The main aim of the research project has been to assess the contribution of southern European states in creating new approaches to European security management in the western Mediterranean. It has concentrated on evaluating the effectiveness of the southern European input into:

(a) shifting the balance of thinking and practice from military to non-military approaches to security in the western Mediterranean, especially in the cross-sectoral co-ordination of these approaches;

(b) creating new security relationships between the EU and NATO;

(c) reinforcing the EU’s Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) initiative as a test case of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and of the EU’s evolving capabilities in defence and security co-operation.

In the course of the research, more emphasis has been placed on the comparative context (namely, what the Mediterranean illustrates in terms of models of co-operation with European ‘outsiders’). The intention has been to link the research more closely with other projects in the ‘One Europe or Several?’ programme, and to increase the utility of its findings for practitioners and academics engaged in broader debates on the evolution of the EU’s Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and internal security issues arising in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) area.

The changing security environment in the Mediterranean in 1999-2001 has also affected the course of research, as existing policy initiatives have had to be abandoned due to the rise in violence in the Middle East, and others – such as the EU’s European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), unforeseen at the time of designing the research – have emerged as significant developments during the course of the project.

A further emphasis, arising partly from this, has come from concerns expressed by interviewees and the project advisory board regarding the role of the US in promoting
security in the Mediterranean region. Greater attention has thus been paid to exploring the potential synergies as well as competition between European and North American visions of and strategies towards the region.

Methodology

The research methodology consisted primarily of conducting interviews with key actors in the relevant national and international agencies, evaluating associated documentation and engaging (as invited) in the policy processes shaping changes in these areas.

Although a detailed questionnaire was prepared, the varying interests and responsibilities of those interviewed meant that it was not always easy to conduct structured interviews. On the one hand, conceptual questions along the lines of 'how does your government define security?' led to either vague or all-encompassing responses, or to references to other ministries or spheres of competence. On the other hand, the individuals in question often spoke in detail about policy processes still in the making in terms of the prospects for their outcome. Quite frequently, officials were often not as informed about larger picture issues as we had expected, and others spoke under conditions of confidentiality.

Overall, the numbers of individuals directly involved in Mediterranean security affairs proved to be quite small, comprising in some cases a senior official of ambassadorial or equivalent rank situated in the foreign ministry (as in France, Spain and Italy), either with a small team of officials (Italy) or alone (France) with responsibility for co-ordinating Mediterranean policy across relevant geographical departments and with officials at EU country delegations in Brussels. This made the individual senior officials in question central to maintaining the profile of their government’s EU-level engagement with the Mediterranean, but rendered assessments of the full relevance of the Mediterranean in overall government policy more difficult. The importance of illegal migration from North Africa to Europe, for example, means that governments have tended to bypass the EMP to address its component elements through bilateral channels. The complexity of migration, as an internal as well as external policy issue going beyond security alone also meant that it is managed by a greater number of agencies and individuals than fell within the parameters of our project design. The exception is Portugal which generally prefers the multilateral frameworks for addressing Mediterranean issues owing to the relative weakness of its bilateral relations in North Africa.

Results

In substantive terms, it was clear that the major states under examination viewed Mediterranean security in a diffuse fashion, as a function of the on-going development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) initiative and more directly to the bilateral security concerns they have with individual North African states. In the case of Spain, this has resulted in a growing prioritisation of relations with Morocco in seeking to manage the growing influx of illegal migrants, as well as the status of existing migrant workers in Spain. In the bilateral context, there are also remaining issues of a strategic nature, namely Spain’s disputed sovereignty over the Ceuta and Melilla enclaves. The
most striking finding has been the secondary role Spain has played in shaping the EMP’s security dimensions, where Spain not only hosted the launch of the process, but Spanish officials were also heavily engaged in the original promotion of the initiative as well as its content and design.

For Italy, another promoter of the EMP, subsequent developments in the neighbouring Balkans have also relativised the centrality of the EMP to Italian security thinking vis-à-vis its southern neighbours. Concerns exist over illegal North African migration, but they are not as prominent as anxieties over the influx of Albanians and other Balkan minorities. The Balkan groups are perceived to be engaged in the spread of criminality, complicating the task of combating mafia activities and the trafficking of people and drugs already absorbing considerable Italian resources.

For France, the key security relationship in North Africa is with Algeria, where events since the end of 2000 have worsened, with revelations by former security officers about military abuses, the continuing violence and the near arrest in Paris in April 2001 of one of Algeria’s ruling elite of generals placing stresses on bilateral relations. The focus of our research period, however, was on the role of France during its presidency of the EU (July-December 2000) during which period the French government was responsible for hosting an EMP summit at Foreign Minister level in Marseilles in November. This summit was due to adopt the EMP ‘Charter for Peace and Stability’ arising from lengthy negotiations over the future direction collective security arrangements should take across the whole Mediterranean region. The absence of Syria and Lebanon in protest against Israel’s reactions against Palestinian protestors meant that this Charter was not adopted by the required consensus. However, the importance of promoting Mediterranean initiatives has also been overshadowed in French security thinking by its frontline role in developing the ESDP.

Portugal is perceived, and perceives itself, to be a minor player in the Mediterranean. Under the Portuguese EU presidency (January-June 2000), the task of completing preparatory work for the EU’s Common Mediterranean Strategy fell to the Portuguese foreign ministry officials, who appealed to their counterparts in the UK Foreign Office to assist in finalising the draft document which was adopted by the European Council at Feira in June 2000. Portugal’s foreign policy concerns continue to be dominated by post-colonial struggles in South Africa and East Timor and whilst migration has increased, it has been mainly from central and eastern Europe.

Overall, none of the states examined were prepared to champion the Mediterranean as a key issue in their multilateral security relations, choosing rather to engage in bilateral diplomacy over specific issues where national security was concerned, including military co-operation. In part this was a response to the unwieldiness and relative inflexibility of large policy frameworks such as the EMP, which focuses on matters of principle (such as the peaceful settlement of conflicts, or regionwide ‘partnership’ building measures) rather than specific matters requiring more immediate attention. In this respect, however, most officials we contacted seemed to rely on the EMP, as it evolved, to pre-empt or resolve medium to longer term security questions affecting the broader region, rather than being
of specific utility to those arising with regard to North Africa. Most were aware of, and admitted the limited progress made under the EMP’s security volet, even before the failed adoption of the Charter. The Italians, in particular, seemed frustrated by the lack of concrete measures adopted to confront even relatively uncontroversial issues, such as cooperation over environmental damage control. The Italian foreign ministry was active in suggesting measures which other partners were not prepared to accept, creating divisions, rather than a commonality of perspective across southern Europe regarding the priorities to be addressed in North Africa.

The period of research was also marked by the focus within the EU on developing the ESDP, which overshadowed regionally specific security co-operation. The aim of this activity has been to prepare the EU better to address humanitarian crises and joint military actions falling short of war, drawing particularly on the experience of Europe’s unpreparedness for the Kosovo crisis. Underlying this, and accounting also for the lack of priority attached to the western Mediterranean, is that compared to the Balkans, North Africa remains a region whose security challenges are perceived in socio-economic rather than politico-military terms.

The lack of any direct military or other threat to European security from North Africa also goes some way towards explaining why conceptions of security were so diluted in the interviews we held. While most interviewees were clear that greater regional security could be one of the desirable outcomes of promoting free trade and greater economic and political pluralism, it was perceived as a distant objective. Less vocally expressed were fears that the transition from centralised, elite dominated economies and political systems would provoke uncontrolled popular reactions and threaten energy supplies. Although the southern European states have attempted to diversify oil and gas supplies, Algeria and Libya remain the most significant energy suppliers for the region. These fears have led, nevertheless, to an avoidance on the part of the EU’s political structures (above all the Council) and individual southern European states of addressing the region’s core political failings, including significant human rights abuses, and the continuing high death toll in Algeria. Although participation in the EMP engages partners to improve their record in these areas, the EU has preferred to rely on promoting economic development as a motor for political change. An extensive existing literature of critiques of the EMP, to which we have added, suggests that this linkage between economic prosperity and political and economic pluralism is not a reflection of what is likely to occur. To the contrary: the concentration of wealth in the hands of the region’s elites is endangering political and social stability within states, with little external pressure or influence on regional governments to devolve power and resources more widely within society.

We also focused our attention on the Mediterranean engagement of NATO and decreasingly, the Western European Union (WEU). Both of these organisations have established dialogues with individual Mediterranean partners since 1992 (WEU) and 1995 (NATO) to discuss political and military issues of mutual concern. In this respect, while dialogue was perceived to have a limited utility, it also gave rise to frictions over the extent to which core changes in European defence planning might impinge on the Mediterranean, and North Africa in particular. Some North African partners have felt that
explanations, for example over WEU’s force structures, or changes to NATO’s modus operandi provoked by the ESDP, have been slow, incomplete or lacking, at a time when the resolution of respective competencies within the EU, and between the EU and NATO have still to be fully resolved.

In general terms, our research has confirmed that the Mediterranean remains of secondary importance to mainstream European security thinking and that the region is still not perceived as an integral part of the European security debate. Nevertheless, it has become clear from two key developments in 2000, namely, the launch of the EU’s Common Strategy on the Mediterranean at the European Council summit in June 2000, and the reflection paper on ‘Re-invigorating the Barcelona Process’ by the European Commission (External Relations Directorate) in September 2000, that the EU is in fact aware of the need to revisit its policies towards the Mediterranean. This development, which may take some time to result in significantly new policy directions, has provided the project team with an opportunity to contribute to reassessments of policy in the Mediterranean.

Some of the drawbacks and disadvantages of the EMP as a model have been known for some time. Off the record, a number of the officials we spoke to expressed their own criticisms of the inertia of the security process as compared to the economic provisions of the EMP. Even the latter, however, have been deficient, where five years after the inception of the policy, only 26% of funds committed by the EU through the MEDA funding line had actually been disbursed. At the inception of the project, we had expected to see some responses and/or new thinking within governments regarding the structural (if not conceptual) failings of the EMP. Instead, proposals of this kind have emerged from the Commission, and most notably the office of External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten, responding to the request set out by EU governments in the Common Strategy towards the Mediterranean to evaluate the progress of the EMP in its first five years.

The Commission’s recommendations in the document cited above focused largely on restructuring MEDA funding to address infrastructural and sectoral developments and encouragement to horizontal development projects. The recommendations also included linking EU financial and technical assistance more closely to progress made in human rights observance and the general sphere of ‘good governance’. Without the political input of governments, including those of the EU’s partners in the south, however, the Commission has not been able to recommend that the regional scope of the EMP be revised to reflect new regional realities – including the impossibility in the foreseeable future of creating a regional free trade zone to include Arab states alongside Israel. Where southern Mediterranean partners have suggested forms of sub-regional co-operation – such as the smaller free trade zone proposed by Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan in November 2000 – the EU has responded with encouragement. However, trans-regional initiatives such as these do not address the security problems at the core of North Africa.

The role of EU governments, above all in the southern group in question – has been to maintain the existing process and structures without fundamentally re-assessing the
content or applicability of either. Our policy recommendations start from the premise that a more fundamental review of the continuing validity of the EMP is in fact required, if only because the consensus among 27 partners has already proved difficult to maintain, especially in the field of security. One of the critiques aired frequently by interviewees was that Arab states have been slow not only to propose their own initiatives but to respond in concrete terms to those put forward by the EU. Non-governmental contacts in North Africa, however, suggest that this is because the real interest of regional governments is not in political, social or even fundamental economic change, but in fulfilling the minimum of obligations required to attract EU financial assistance and investments, in order to maintain the status quo. This situation neither addresses the security needs of North Africa as a whole, nor those of the EU in the longer term, as popular and more organised dissent against exclusionary policies have been rising, along with migrationary (and even terrorist) pressures into Europe itself.

For the EU to restructure its policy approaches towards North Africa, a clearer sense of its security priorities within and towards the region needs to be articulated. This has perhaps become more pressing in the wake of the World Trade Towers and Pentagon bombings of September 11 2001, since Algeria – and in addition to Algerians within Europe and North America – has become a breeding ground for disenchanted, anti-western activism. It is this region where the density of the Arab world’s population resides, with the highest rates of unemployment. In this regard, the EU will need to co-ordinate its policies better with the US, which perceives the western Mediterranean as part of its wider Middle Eastern interests. As a consequence of the struggle against international terrorism, the US may focus more direct attention on this region. American and European priorities towards this region may not, however, coincide, which also argues for the EU to prepare strategies to minimise the potential fall-out from American policies devised from within a global, rather than regionally-specific perspective. In this respect, Europe’s proximity and greater knowledge of the realities of North Africa will also need to be brought into play, but from a renewed perspective that encourages and builds on democratic tendencies outside immediate government circles.

Finally, the southern European states themselves have more interest than before in addressing some of the larger issues pertaining to regional security in a multilateral, EU context. The growing harmonisation of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) within the EU has direct relevance to the management of migration and asylum questions affecting the whole EU. Drawing on their bilateral experience, Spain and Italy could share examples of ‘best practice’ with other EU states, as well as encouraging a shared approach to the EU’s re-evaluation of its admission of legal migrants on the basis of labour needs. However, the research found that despite references to ‘Club Med’ solidarity, there is a very low level of co-ordination between the southern European states, sometimes reflecting national rivalries (between Spain and Italy). We found no evidence of an effective Mediterranean lobby within the EU formed by our selected group of countries.

Activities:
The project team have engaged in high levels of contact with both academic and non-academic users and in particular, most conferences attended have involved interaction with officials preparing the EU's Common Strategy on the Mediterranean and the Charter for Peace and Stability.

The main project funded event was a workshop convened by the project team in Catania in June 2000. This brought together a wide spectrum of practitioners (from European foreign ministries, the European Commission, NATO, WEU, serving military officers) to engage with representatives of non-governmental organisations, academics, journalists, and analysts, including from North Africa. Some of the issues tackled – such as environmental security, migration, women's representation and non-governmental perspectives – stimulated discussions among individuals who do not normally meet to discuss the security dimensions of policy, with extremely positive and well-received results.

Claire Spencer has also been able to engage more directly in the policy-making process with regards to the region. In 2000, the Bertelsmann Foundation in Munich, brought together key foreign ministry officials from France, Germany, Portugal and the UK, with members of the European Council secretariat and Commission to discuss the content of the Common Strategy while still at its drafting stage. Claire Spencer was one of three academic advisors to this group of which met for five, day-long workshops. The outcome was a jointly drafted 20-page briefing paper, from which some points were directly incorporated into the Common Strategy in June 2000.

In addition, Claire Spencer was appointed Specialist Adviser to the inquiry by the House of Lords Common Foreign and Security Policy Committee (Sub-Committee C) into the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean in October 2000. Her tasks included the preparation of briefing papers and questions for witnesses, direct advice on witnesses and supplementary material and in drafting the final report.

Other activities which have included significant non-academic engagement include:

2001:

**Geneva Centre for Security Policy:** Spencer: Lecture on re-conceptualising Mediterranean Security.

**Anglo-Libyan Dialogue:** Pargeter: conference in Malta with participants from UK, US and Libya.

**JSCSC, Bracknell:** (Spencer) Two Lectures on the Maghreb & Algeria.

**Royal College of Defence Studies:** London (Gillespie) Lecture on 'The Iberian Peninsular: Current Security Challenges'

MEDA Democracy Project Workshop (Gillespie) Ran workshop attended by academics and officials from the European Commission.

2000:


EU-Enlargement & the Mediterranean: (Pargeter): Centre for Reform, London, seminar series on the impacts of EU enlargement; paper revised for publication (Spencer/Pargeter).

FMES Confidence-Building Measures in the Mediterranean: (Spencer): Round-table discussion with French naval officers and academics on practical measures towards confidence-building.

British Council (Italy), Taormina conference: (Spencer): chaired working group on conflict and crisis management.


JSCSC, Bracknell: the Maghreb: (Spencer) Lecture.

DERA, Strategic Assessment Method (SAM) (Spencer/Pargeter) & Psychopolitical Analysis Method (PAM) (Spencer), May-June, London & Farnborough: test group assessment of new strategic analysis methods on environmental crises (SAM) and Algeria (PAM).


European University Institute: (Pargeter) participant in Mediterranean Summer School.

Maritime Strategic Studies Institute (Royal Navy), Mediterranean Working Group: Oxford (Spencer/Gillespie): round-table on strategic implications of recent and long-term changes in Mediterranean region. Presentations on "EU Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean" (Gillespie) and “Prospects for Mediterranean security” (Spencer)

Foro Formentor, Fundación Repsol: Mallorca (Gillespie/Spencer): high level meetings between North African and southern European officials on Mediterranean.

Institute for Strategic Research (Austrian Military Academy)/Centro Militare Studi Strategici (CeMiSS) Vienna (Spencer): Austro-Italian round-table on Mediterranean security co-operation. Presentation on ‘Perspectives from the southern rim’.


MEDA Democracy Project Workshop (Gillespie) Ran workshop attended by academics and officials from the European Commission.

1999:

Joint Services Command & Staff College: (Spencer) Lecture & debate with international military staff at on Europe and the Maghreb; included Moroccan and Egyptian military officers.

International Institute for Strategic Studies/Mohammed V University (Spencer) Seminar on economic change and security in the Mediterranean, Rabat, Morocco.

Halki Seminar: Paper ‘CBMs and PBM’s in the Charter’ (Spencer) ‘Libya and the EMP’ (Pargeter).

Meetings in NATO and North Atlantic Assembly (NATO-PA) (Spencer) Brussels on the future of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue

Wilton Park Conference on the Mediterranean Free Trade Area, Malta. (Pargeter)

NATO-PA seminar on Mediterranean security: (Spencer) Cordoba

Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta: (Gillespie) Workshop on Security and the EMP

Foro Formentor, Fundación Repsol: Mallorca (Gillespie): high level meetings between North African and southern European officials on Mediterranean

Outputs

The project team have secured a book contract with Macmillan/Palgrave and the manuscript is due to be delivered by September 2001. The main author will be Claire Spencer, with contributions from the project team. Preparatory work is underway,
although progress has been disrupted by demands of undertaking short-term contract work from July 2001.

A series of individual articles, working papers and conference papers have been produced – see Regard for further information.

**Impacts**

Work on Mediterranean Security by all 3 researchers is frequently cited in published works and during conference discussions.

The research has led to a number of consultancies including Claire Spencer’s being commissioned by the French Ministry of Defence to undertake a study on Britain’s contribution to Mediterranean security. Alison Pargeter has also been awarded funding by the Italian Centro Militare Studi Strategici (CeMiSS) to undertake research on relations between Libya and Europe, including field-work in Libya.

All the project team are regularly interviewed by the media.

Claire Spencer and Alison Pargeter are frequently consulted by lawyers on asylum cases of North African nationals.

**Future Research Priorities**

We would like to continue our work by amplifying the significance of the Mediterranean in the context of the post 11th September events and to develop work on sub-state security challenges.

Alison Pargeter intends to develop her work on Libya and to raise funding to undertake further study of Libya’s relations with both Europe and Africa.