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Schumacher, T.; Bouris, D.; Olszewska, M.

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Of policy entrepreneurship, bandwagoning and free-riding: EU member states and multilateral cooperation frameworks for Europe's southern neighbourhood

Tobias Schumacher^{a*}, Dimitris Bouris^b and Maja Olszewska^a

^a*College of Europe (Natolin), European Neighbourhood Policy Chair, Warsaw, Poland;* ^b*Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

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Over the past 25 years the EU and NATO have displayed considerable agency and thus influence as far as the development of institutionalised collective cooperation and/or foreign policy frameworks towards Europe's southern neighbourhood is concerned. Against this backdrop, this article puts EU and NATO member states' foreign policies towards their southern neighbourhood at its centre. After mapping their southern neighbourhood-related interests, it discusses how they have been pursuing these interests – to the extent that they exist – within and beyond the EU and NATO and examines whether this pursuit has resulted in concrete foreign policy action. The article focuses on the EU Big-5, i.e. France, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany, as well as Portugal, usually considered a “small state”. This choice allows for both a most deviant and a most similar case comparison and contrasts policy entrepreneurship (France, Spain, Italy) vis-à-vis Europe's southern neighbourhood with bandwagoning and free-riding tendencies (Portugal) and a mix of opportunity-maximising and/or fence-sitting practices (United Kingdom and Germany).

Keywords: Europe; EU; NATO; Mediterranean; foreign policy; policy entrepreneurship

Introduction

A visible engagement of EU and NATO member states in what the EU calls its southern neighbourhood came to the fore in the first years after the end of the Cold War, as expressed by Italy's and Spain's joint proposal of a “Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean” (CSCM) (Gillespie, 1997), modelled along the lines of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and thus the Helsinki Act of 1975, and the French-initiated Western Mediterranean Forum, commonly referred to as the 5+5 Initiative (Larrabee, Green, Lesser, and Zanini, 1998). By resonating with the post-Cold War security environment and the multi-dimensional security challenges emanating from the (southern) Mediterranean basin, these initiatives were not only an expression of a growing awareness and willingness of some EU and thus NATO member states located on the northern Mediterranean shores to engage in multilateral and inter-regional cooperation schemes with their governmental counterparts in the southern neighbourhood. They also served as forerunners of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue

*Corresponding author. Email: tobias.schumacher@coleurope.eu

initiative, established in 1994 and reaching out to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Mauritania, and the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which was established just one year later.

As EU and NATO bodies over the past 26 years have displayed considerable agency and thus influence as far as the development of institutionalized collective cooperation/foreign policy frameworks towards the southern neighbourhood are concerned, this article puts EU and NATO member states' foreign policies towards Europe's southern neighbourhood at its centre. Mapping their southern neighbourhood-related interests, analysing the way they have been pursuing these interests and discussing the extent to which this pursuit has resulted in concrete foreign policy action (also via multilateral settings), this article focuses on the EU Big-5, i.e. France, Spain, Italy, the UK and Germany, as well as Portugal, usually considered to be a "small state" (Magone, 2000). This choice is justified as it allows for both a most deviant, as well as a most similar case comparison and contrasts policy entrepreneurship (France, Spain, Italy) vis-à-vis Europe's southern neighbourhood with bandwagoning and free-riding tendencies (Portugal) and a mix of opportunity-maximizing and/or fence-sitting practices (UK, Germany). The analysis will conclude by offering a brief discussion of the extent to which southern neighbourhood-related foreign policy action of the six countries under study has been complementary to, or competing with, existing EU and NATO policy/dialogue frameworks. This entails a cursory debate on the issue of effectiveness, here defined as the degree to which stated foreign policy objectives have been achieved, in conjunction with some critical remarks on whether individual foreign policies have been sufficient to safeguard interests.

Germany

For decades Germany's interest in and toward Europe's southern neighbourhood was a function of Cold War dynamics and was limited to development aid, cultural cooperation and the fostering of commercial ties. In other words, German foreign policy towards the southern neighbours revolved around a rather narrow aid-and-trade approach and – almost invariably – came at the expense of any security-related (inter-)action. The end of the East–West conflict, Germany's regained full sovereignty in 1990 and a growing desire to exert greater influence internationally, the rise of anti-Western sentiment across the region in the context of the second Gulf War, the outbreak of the Algerian civil war in the early 1990s, as well as numerous terrorist attacks in southern tourist destinations, which claimed the lives of German citizens, did however bring the Maghreb and the Mashreq gradually onto Germany's foreign and security policy agenda. This has been accentuated by Germany's participation in the Schengen Agreement, which, due to its removal of border controls between the participating countries, enhanced the notion of proximity to an emerging, though increasingly unstable neighbourhood, and by a constant intensification of German–Israeli relations (Del Sarto, 1998; Gardner Feldman, 2004). Mainly as a consequence of Germany's exposure to, and participation in both the EMP and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and thus the corresponding elite socialization dynamics (Behr, 2015, p. 104), but particularly after the outbreak of Arab uprisings in early 2011, successive German governments have become increasingly sensitive towards the promotion of democratic structures, good governance, the rule of law, and human rights. In light of the multi-faceted soft and hard security risks emanating from the southern neighbourhood and further beyond, other issue-areas, such as the fight against terrorism, border control, migration, as well as conflict resolution are nowadays complementing these interests.

Yet, Germany's formal involvement in institutionalized cooperation/dialogue frameworks has never resulted in any major policy entrepreneurship in the EU or NATO. Even though the formal decision to establish the EMP was taken during the German EU Presidency at the Essen European

Council Summit in December 1994, for the government of then German Chancellor Kohl it was merely a concession made to Spain and France in exchange for their support of further EU aid and integration-related policies towards Central and Eastern Europe – after all, the geographical region considered to be at the centre of German foreign policy (Hofhansel, 2005). Likewise, Chancellor Merkel’s vehement support in 2007 and 2008 for a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) – as opposed to a Mediterranean Union (MU) – that would include, rather than exclude, all EU member states has to be seen in a similar light as it was mainly destined to safeguard the fragile consensus within the EU over the need to maintain a collective EU policy vis-à-vis Europe’s southern neighbourhood and to prevent French president Sarkozy, who had initiated and unilaterally pursued the idea throughout 2007, from seriously jeopardizing the long-standing Franco-German alliance. Equally important, this general support allowed Germany, in close coordination with Poland and Sweden, to push through the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, thus ensuring once more that the EU’s policies towards its southern and eastern neighbourhoods are geographically balanced, in symbolic and substantial terms (Schumacher, 2011).

In spite of Germany’s generally positive attitude towards multilateral frameworks, successive German governments have repeatedly made clear that, at least as far as Europe’s southern neighbourhood is concerned, they do support collective, i.e. EU and NATO cooperation and dialogue frameworks, provided these do not impose additional costs, or at least do not challenge existing financial aid arrangements. Thus, it was the decision in 1994 that all future activities within the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue would take place on a self-funding basis that allowed Germany to refrain from acting as a potential veto-player. Like in the UfM, Germany’s participation in the Dialogue itself has been marked by a considerable degree of passivism and indifference, even though then German foreign minister Fischer in early 2004 called for the creation of a “Transatlantic Initiative for the Near and Middle East” and thus an expansion of the Dialogue by Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria (Leurdijk, 2004). As this plea has to be understood in the wider context of Germany’s special relationship with Israel and Fischer’s personal ambitions to revive the Middle East road map for peace and thus his seven-point Idea Paper of early 2002, as well as his second four-page Middle East peace initiative of late 2002, this call neither reflected a break with Germany’s overall reluctance to push forward EU/NATO southern neighbourhood-related initiatives, nor did it generate any concrete policy entrepreneurship in either organization.

Conversely, Germany continues to channel its interests – and increasingly so in the last 15 years – by diversifying and expanding its bilateral relations in the southern neighbourhood. For example, in the context of the so-called Arab Spring, this has led the late foreign minister Westerwelle – who was the first western foreign minister to visit Egyptian president Morsi in July 2012 after he was elected – to argue in favour of the initiation of dialogue with Islamist movements, to temporarily host and co-finance Syrian opposition actors in Berlin during parts of 2011 and 2012, and to establish so-called transformation partnerships with Tunisian and Egyptian governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. At the same time however, and responding to supposedly influential domestic voices’ critique that the EU’s (southern) neighbourhood policy had failed because everything had been ceded to the former colonial powers of France and Italy (Missfelder, 2011), this has also resulted in occasional, yet consequential misjudgements and decisions, as was the case when Germany abstained from the vote on UN Security Council resolution 1973 to impose a no-fly zone over Libya.

UK

The history of British presence in the southern neighbourhood dates back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), and as such, due to its colonial past, it predates the involvement of Germany, Spain, Portugal or Italy. Over the years, British

foreign policy towards Europe's southern neighbourhood has evolved and gone through different and at times antagonistic phases (Hollis, 2010). However, two broad interests have dominated British foreign policy in the southern neighbourhood and have remained the same throughout these phases: the control and access to oil and the desire for regional stability (Sedgwick, 2007, p. 3). Since the beginning of joining the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, the UK managed to play a prominent role but also aligned itself with European positions mainly due to the fact that similarly to its partners, it was also heavily dependent on Middle East oil. What has driven UK policies towards the southern neighbourhood over these decades has been a continuous effort to balance its special relationship with the US and the EU's growing ambitions in the region. As such, the UK has traditionally played the role of a transatlantic bridge (Müller, 2012, p. 114).

The UK has formally been involved in the institutionalized cooperation/dialogue frameworks of both the EU and NATO. Being one of its founding members, the UK played an important role in the creation of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue in 1994, thus serving its role as a transatlantic bridge by providing the USA with a concrete multilateral platform to engage in security dialogue in the Mediterranean. The end of the Cold War, the entering into force of the Maastricht Treaty and the positive atmosphere created by the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, made the UK support the EMP based on the logic that stability could not be achieved for the Maghreb in isolation of events on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict front (Kukushev, 2010). In addition, its general support was inspired by the notion that participating in the EMP would enhance British trade interests in Europe's southern neighbourhood. Although in 1996 the UK supported the decision of the EU's Council of Ministers to establish a Special Representative for the Middle East, Britain made it clear that EU diplomatic initiatives should support US policy in the Middle East rather than create any alternative visions (Hollis, 1997). Two years later, holding the rotating EU Presidency, the UK decided to focus on the economic aspects of the EMP by trying to mobilize capital flows in the Mediterranean which were designed to build on an investment conference held in London in 1997 and which were considered to be the UK's most important contribution to the EMP (Youngs, 1999, p. 7). Despite this, a Middle East Summit, initiated by Tony Blair in 1998 with the aim of re-energizing the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, did not include the EU in its political discussions as the Blair government considered the political negotiations "as an US domain off-limits to the Europeans" (Müller, 2012, p. 115).

Acting as a policy entrepreneur, the UK was also behind the genesis of what became the ENP. In a proposal submitted to the European Commission in January 2002, Foreign Minister Jack Straw suggested a differentiated, ambitious and long-term approach to the new eastern neighbours, in particular Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. The proposal was supported by Sweden which went further and called for a "broader and more active policy towards our neighbours in the bow-shaped area ranging from Russia and Ukraine to the Mediterranean" (quoted in Johansson-Nogués, 2015, p. 139). Following the events of 9/11, the Blair government signed up to the "war on terror" and from the beginning supported military action against Iraq, thus going against Franco-German efforts to block the invasion. To this end, the contradiction of acting as a bridge between the USA and the EU reached its height in 2003 when the UK was instrumental in "splitting Europe" (Joffé, 2006) over the issue of Iraq. Subsequently, the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) unavoidably led the UK, which held the EU Presidency in 2005, to adopt a highly securitized agenda. The outcome of what was supposed to be a landmark event, the first Euro-Med summit in November 2005, addressing justice and home affairs matters in the Euro-Mediterranean space, was however disappointing due to the non-attendance of most of the Southern partners' Heads of States. As a result, the UK's effort to capitalize on Spain's relations with its southern neighbourhood and organize the 10th anniversary event in Barcelona was deemed a major failure (Joffé, 2006).

More recently, the events of the so-called “Arab Spring” in Europe’s wider southern neighbourhood resulted in a rather inconsistent and/or selective response from the UK. As such, in the cases of Libya and Syria, prime minister Cameron strongly criticized the regimes and sought diplomatic and military action, while in the cases of Egypt, Tunisia and further beyond, as in Yemen, it did not engage in any substantial action at all (Leech & Gaskarth, 2015, p. 155). All in all, the UK displayed both signs of fence-sitting and opportunity maximizing, and acted even as a policy entrepreneur at times. Yet, such entrepreneurship – and in contrast to Germany’s, Spain’s, France’s and Italy’s – has to be understood both in light of the UK’s close relations with the US and thus a strong desire to ensure a strong transatlantic dimension, and its security concerns which, in turn, explain the UK’s attempts at securitizing non-security-related cooperation areas within the EMP (and the ENP).

France

The Mediterranean has always been France’s “special” zone of influence due to its long presence in the region as a former colonial power. This is the reason why France, among all EU member states, has some of the most long-standing and most developed diplomatic relations in Europe’s southern neighbourhood. Having been one of the founding members of the EEC, over the years France has managed to “upload” its ideas as well as promote and project its own interests at the European level. The key principles and norms of the “politique Arabe”, first introduced in the early 1960s by President de Gaulle, still guide France’s foreign policy towards the southern neighbourhood. The French “politique Arabe”, which for some analysts has been guided by broader geopolitical considerations (Cerny, 1980) while for some others by regional developments (Behr, 2009, pp. 20–21), aimed at establishing close economic, political and cultural relations with all Arab states and maintaining a leadership role for France in the Mediterranean. The reason behind this was that firstly, France had established itself as a major trade partner and arms supplier to Arab countries (Müller, 2012, p. 91) but also secondly, by the second half of the 1960s, 90% of its oil imports came from the Middle East and North Africa (Kolodziej, 1971, p. 510).

To maintain this influence and foothold in the southern neighbourhood throughout the years, France has used different policies and channels to promote its interests and has felt “obliged” to put the region high on the agenda as well as make authoritative and at times unilateral decisions. In Kolodziej’s (1971, p. 503) words, “the French have never wavered in their insistence that they have the right to define the terms of accord between the Arab states and Israel and the larger security arrangements for the region”. The regional perspective that France wanted to promote resulted in its strong support to the Barcelona conference in 1995 – in spite of some occasional disputes with Spain over who would lead the EMP – which according to Howorth (1996, p. 157) converted “la politique Arabe” to a “politique méditerranéenne”. In EU Council meetings before the launch of the Barcelona Process in Corfu, Essen and Cannes, France (alongside Spain, Italy and Greece) had already pushed for a refocusing of EU policy from Central and Eastern Europe to Europe’s southern neighbourhood (Koszel, 2014, p. 64). Moreover, additional French interests achieved through the EMP included the creation of a single framework which could embrace relations between EU member states and all southern neighbours, the bringing of these countries into a closer EU orbit, and the establishment of a security partnership across the Mediterranean which would eventually enhance France’s role in the CFSP (Koszel, 2014, p. 169).

During the last two decades France has tried to preserve its leading role in the southern neighbourhood through an active diplomacy conducted via different frameworks and channels. As a permanent member of the UN and as one of NATO’s founding members, France did not limit itself in trying to acquire a leading role only in EU foreign policy but it has also tried to have a strong voice in other international organizations that directly or indirectly deal with Europe’s

southern neighbourhood. What is noteworthy, though, is that contrary to the UK, France has traditionally been willing to challenge the US dominance and monopoly in the region, thus advocating a more multilateral approach especially when it came to issues of conflict mediation and resolution. At the same time, when seeing that it is not capable of exercising leadership and controlling the outcomes, France often adopted “go-it alone” attitudes which resulted in lack of coordination mainly within the EU (Müller, 2012, p. 93). One of several examples of this approach has been the response to the Gaza War (December 2008–January 2009) when France, although not formally holding the EU Presidency, was still trying to represent the EU and mediate among different parties in order to broker a ceasefire through its president Nicolas Sarkozy. The result was an extremely ill-coordinated EU response and image, as at the same time that Sarkozy was in the region an official EU delegation was also present trying to launch a ceasefire proposal together with Egypt (Müller, 2012, p. 98).

Another example in this regard was president Sarkozy’s plan to create a MU. The project, initially envisaged to run in parallel to the EU without any formal institutional links, was destined to include only coastal Mediterranean countries and was a clear attempt to create and enforce a French zone of influence in the southern neighbourhood (Delgado, 2011, p. 48; Koszel, 2014, p. 66). Yet, after German opposition (Schumacher, 2011), and Italian and Spanish interventions in December 2007, the project was revised in order to include all 27 EU member states and was re-named to UfM.

More recently, in the context of Arab uprisings in 2011, France was one of the first countries calling on the EU to adopt economic sanctions against the Qaddafi regime only six days after protests had started in Libya. After declaring that “Qaddafi must go” (Watt & Norton-Taylor, 2011) and following an extraordinary European Council meeting where it became clear that there would not be a consensus regarding a military intervention in Libya, Sarkozy engaged in alliance-building and lined up with British prime minister Cameron and they both took the lead with regard to military action in Libya. Although France wanted to make it a CSDP operation in the end it had to accept that NATO would run it because of the US threat to withdraw otherwise.

Italy

Italy’s geographical location at the centre of the Mediterranean basin has continuously provided subsequent Italian governments with an opportunity to engage in regional geopolitical leadership and policy entrepreneurship, at least theoretically. The very same feature, however, renders Italy particularly vulnerable to threats emanating from Europe’s southern neighbourhood. This position, in combination with vital Italian security interests, such as the control of irregular immigration, protection against Islamist terrorism and the stability of energy supplies, has generated a dichotomy in Italian policies towards Europe’s southern neighbourhood: on the one hand, and as far as dealing with region-related soft security threats are concerned, Italian foreign policy has been marked by the delegation of these concerns onto the EU level, thus attempting to Europeanize them. On the other hand, Italy has repeatedly turned towards NATO whenever more hard security-related issues were at stake.

In contrast to France, which boasts similar interests and concerns with respect to Europe’s “near abroad”, Italy has refrained from engaging itself in unilateral policy entrepreneurship, channelling instead its interests primarily via the EU and NATO (Holmes, 1996). Yet, it is true that, initially, in the early 1990s, Italy’s then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gianni De Michelis, was influential in the envisaged setting up of several multilateral cooperation frameworks, such as the “*Quadrangolare*”, also known as the “Central European Initiative” with Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia, and the CSCM. In particular, the proposed structure of the latter, with its three basket logic addressing political, economic and military issues simultaneously, was indicative

of the importance that Italy has been attaching ever since to a broader, “global” policy towards its southern neighbourhood and, in fact, the entire Mediterranean (Carbone, 2008).

However, with the change of government in 1992, Italian activism weakened considerably. The Algerian civil war in the 1990s, which impacted negatively on democratic reforms in all Maghreb countries, did not inspire the Italian *Farnesina* – the Italian Foreign Ministry – to adopt a more pro-active southern neighbourhood-related foreign policy, except for the hosting of two meetings of Algerian opposition groups in Rome in 1994 and 1995, none of which generated any results (Holmes, 1996). Instead of condemning the massive human rights violations in Algeria and pushing the Algerian military regime to engage in negotiations leading to a ceasefire and a return to the democratic process that was interrupted in December 1991, Italy in 1994 intensified bilateral relations by signing a gas deal over 4 billion cubic metres per annum and by finalizing the second construction phase of the Sicilian pipeline (Ghiles, 1992).

Regardless of which party has been in power throughout the last 25 years, Italy has repeatedly engaged in coalition-building mainly with Spain. In this capacity, it has advocated a balanced EU foreign policy and thus a balanced distribution of financial assistance towards the EU’s eastern and southern neighbourhoods (Carbone, Coralluzzo, Del Sarto, & Tocci, 2011), and it worked towards ensuring that Europe’s southern neighbourhood features saliently both on NATO’s and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s (OSCE’s) agenda. For example, this became obvious in 1995 when Italy held the chairmanship of the OSCE and supported Spain vocally in its endeavours to rally support among EU member states for the creation of the EMP. In particular, its support for the latter reflected subsequent Italian governments’ desire for the establishment of a common framework mechanism that would accommodate existing Mediterranean cooperation initiatives and complement, rather than replace, NATO’s emerging role in the Mediterranean. This vehement support in favour of multilateral cooperation mechanisms (Carbone, 2008) can be explained by the widely shared notion among Italian parties that such frameworks provide supposedly more effective channels for the pursuit of national interests than any unilateral policy initiative. Yet, while Italy has displayed a particular interest in the EMP’s first basket, i.e. political and security cooperation (Carbone et al., 2011), it has at no point displayed any willingness to shape its implementation.

In recent years, Italy has demonstrated considerable agency, yet again in the context of the EU or through coalition-building. As far as the former is concerned, it was Romano Prodi who insisted on the inclusion of the southern Mediterranean into the ENP in late 2002, which was originally foreseen to reach out only to eastern neighbours (Del Sarto & Schumacher, 2005). As regards the latter, and in contrast to Italy’s generally positive, yet passive stance in the negotiations on the EMP, Italy engaged actively in discussions with Spain and France on the creation of a MU of sorts. Given Italy’s preference for a “Europeanized” MU, it utilized its close relations with Spain and by adopting the Declaration of Rome in December 2007 managed to communicate and thus transform the MU into the UfM (Aliboni, Driss, Schumacher, & Toviás, 2008).

While subsequent Italian governments have been staunch advocates of a common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), Italy under then Prime Minister Berlusconi joined the US-led coalition in 2003 and participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom, thus – like the UK – contributing to a considerable rift in EU foreign policy (Stahl, 2008). The success of the centre-right *Casa delle Libertà* in 2001 and the comeback of Berlusconi as prime minister coincided with the events of 9/11 and the subsequent rise of Western securitization practices, and supporting the US-led war in Iraq pronounced Italy’s security concerns and reliance on Washington’s military leadership. This highlighted once more the different approaches that exist among EU member states as regards intervention/non-intervention practices (Balfour, 2005). Also, this approach should be understood against the backdrop of Berlusconi’s outspokenly Atlanticist attitude (Del Sarto & Tocci, 2008) and conviction that Europe’s southern neighbourhood is the main source of

terrorism. To this end, he utilized Italy's EU membership and gathered support in the European Council in 2003 to put Hamas on the list of terrorist organizations (Zajac, 2015).

In the context of the outbreak of Arab uprisings in early 2011, the Italian government under Berlusconi was primarily occupied with the repercussions that instability and turmoil in Europe's southern periphery may have on Italy and the country's capacity to deal with increasing flows of undocumented migrants. Again, as in previous years, it elevated the issue to the EU level and managed to convince other EU member states to engage in financial burden-sharing (EuroActive, 2011). This was complemented by Italian efforts to gather support among EU member states' governments for providing assistance to Egyptian president Mubarak and his military regime, given the close personal relations between the latter and Berlusconi (Krause-Jackson, 2011). Similarly, Italy's historical legacy of colonial rule in Libya and decades of close energy relations with the Qaddafi regime explain why at first Romani Prodi, in his capacity as Commission President, lobbied for the strengthening of the EU's relations with Libya, and why Berlusconi in early 2011 was so adamant in containing the fallouts of the Libyan civil war. While the government was rather indifferent to the conflict as such in the beginning, it supported UNSC Resolution 1973, providing NATO allies with access to Italian airbases and participating in the military intervention (Daalder & Stavridis, 2011). Arguably, however, this participation was destined to secure Italian energy interests and ensure that post-war Libya would still remain within its sphere of interest, in particular in light of French and British advances.

Spain

The inseparability of geographic and interest-related determinants of Spanish foreign policy put Europe's southern neighbourhood at the forefront of Spain's foreign policy interests. Spanish foreign policy towards its "near abroad" following the end of the Cold War has been rooted in the understanding that economic prosperity and political stability in the region will serve as a safeguard of fundamental Spanish foreign policy interests. These interests relate to a redefined notion of security which, according to the 2013 National Security Strategy, revolves around energy vulnerability, irregular migratory flows, terrorism and armed conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the vulnerability of the maritime space and critical infrastructures, and economic and financial instability (Gobierno de España, 2013). Spain's geopolitical outlook vis-à-vis the southern neighbourhood is also influenced by several neuralgic spots, i.e. the two ex-territorial enclaves Ceuta and Melilla, as well as the Spanish islets in the Mediterranean Sea, all of which on different occasions have been at the heart of tensions with Morocco (Gillespie, 2006).

Against the backdrop of unprecedented flows of irregular migrants from the southern neighbourhood to southern European shores, the exposure to the Algerian civil war in the 1990s and the growth of radical Islamic movements, in conjunction with the corresponding repercussions on regional security, led Spain to engage in measures destined to ensure the continuity, or expansion, of bilateral dialogue mechanisms with its southern neighbours (Núñez Villaverde, 2000), particularly in the Maghreb. Such efforts found their expression, among others, in the conclusion of treaties of friendship with Morocco (1991), Tunisia (1997) and Egypt (2008), as well as through several agreements concluded with Morocco, addressing the movement of people, transit, and readmissions (1992), residence and work permissions (1996), as well as migration of unaccompanied minors (2007).

Spain has traditionally perceived the North African sea border not only as one of the most vulnerable transit points for African migrants, but also as a political hinge between south-western Europe and the Maghreb. This sense of a "shared Mediterranean sensibility" (Núñez Villaverde, 2000, p. 142) is one of the reasons why successive Spanish governments have been instrumental in "uploading" southern neighbourhood-related matters to a sub-regional

(the 5+5 initiative) and supranational (EU) level. The EC's/EU's shift towards paying greater attention towards transition processes in the post-soviet space in the early 1990s urged Spain to increase the region's salience on the EU–European agenda and to commit itself to active policy entrepreneurship. In this vein, the report on the political situation in the Maghreb presented by the late foreign minister Fernández Ordóñez in March 1992 was instrumental as it described the southern neighbourhood rather bluntly as a “ticking time bomb”, which Europe urgently needed to defuse through the creation of new and wide-ranging cooperation schemes (Gillespie & Pollack, 1993). While at first, Spain, together with Italy, was unsuccessful in generating sufficient support for the creation of a CSCM, the prospect of such a multilateral initiative, in conjunction with prime minister Felipe Gonzalez' defiance of German chancellor Kohl, drawing on the support of the British and Dutch governments (Gillespie, 1997), at the Essen European Council in 1994, resulted in the establishment of the EMP (Soler I Lecha & Vaquer I Fanés, 2010) in 1995.

While the initiation of the EMP during the Spanish EU Presidency is a prominent example of Spanish leadership and entrepreneurship within the EU context, NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue is another example of successful Spanish “uploading” efforts with a view to give defence matters more salience in the transatlantic approach towards Europe's southern neighbourhood. Hand in hand with these efforts, Spain joined the newly established Eurofor and Euromafor, trusting that such initiatives could facilitate the desired Europeanization of its strategic interests (Barbé, 2000). However, these attempts have not always been successful and this became visible in 2002 when Spain attempted to “upload” the Perija crisis to the EU (Gillespie, 2006). France and Portugal vetoed an envisaged joint declaration destined to condemn the Moroccan occupation and that entailed that no joint action, as hoped for by Spain, was adopted (Dobrescu, Schumacher, & Stavridis, 2016).

Despite Spain's desire to act as an economic patron in the Maghreb, subsequent Spanish governments proved willing to sacrifice their quest for southern neighbourhood policy leadership in favour of what could be coined “negotiated advocacy”, provided Euro-Mediterranean relations and thus the southern neighbourhood remain high on Brussels' foreign policy agenda. A concrete example in this regard was foreign minister Moratinos' proposal of a Euro-Mediterranean Union in early 2007 (Aliboni et al., 2008) which, once it became evident that it would not receive sufficient support among other EU member states, was seemingly abandoned only to re-emerge in the context of Spain's and Italy's attempts to contain the French-inspired MU project (Bicchi & Gillespie, 2011). While, on that occasion, Spain sided with Italy, on other occasions, such as at the European Council of Seville in 2002, it engaged in alliance-building with France to ensure that the Seville Conclusions provided that “any future cooperation, association or equivalent agreement which the EU/EC concludes with any country should include a clause on joint management of migration flows and on compulsory readmission in the event of illegal immigration” (Council of the European Union, 2002, p. 10). As this was a reflection of Spanish concerns over uncontrolled flows of migration, Spain also expressed its concerns over the creation of the ENP a few months later, given that it feared further imbalances in the EU's provision of financial assistance towards the eastern and southern neighbourhood. However, once the Spanish government under prime minister Zapatero had managed to ensure equal EU support for the southern neighbourhood, Spain became a staunch advocate of the policy throughout the years and – in light of its agriculture- and fisheries-related interests vis-à-vis Morocco – has even been trying to utilize it in order to disguise the gradual diversion of its previously pro-Saharawi position towards a position that favours a Western Saharan autonomy status as part of Morocco.

Portugal

In contrast to the gradual emergence of Europe's southern neighbourhood on Germany's foreign and security policy agenda throughout the 1990s, Portugal, in spite of its geographical proximity

to Morocco, upgraded its relations mainly with the three countries of the inner Maghreb, i.e. Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, only in 2005. Shortly after the electoral success of the socialist party, then prime minister José Sócrates during a visit to Algiers in 2007 declared the Maghreb a “foreign policy priority” (Noivo, 2011), thus putting it on an equal footing with Portugal’s other three foreign policy priorities, which are EU membership, transatlantic relations, and relations with its former colonies. In the following years, this announcement was accompanied by extensive intergovernmental exchanges and visits, as well as the conclusion of numerous agreements and memoranda of understanding in the field of trade, energy, education, research and technological developments, culture, and security and defence (Dobrescu et al., 2016).

Portugal is a founding member of NATO, joined the EU in 1986, and has been loyally participating in both the EMP and the ENP, as well as in the 5+5 Initiative and the short-lived Mediterranean Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation from the moment they were initiated. While this involvement did not generate a deepening of bilateral relations with individual neighbours up until the mid-2000s, it contributed at least to greater awareness among the (small) Portuguese foreign policy community for southern neighbourhood-related developments which, in turn, fostered foreign policy practices that have been marked by bandwagoning, free-riding and occasional initiative-seeking. Interestingly, since the early 1990s, on those occasions that Portugal displayed such practices, they were predominantly pursued simultaneously. A rare exception occurred in 2007, when Portugal held the rotating EU Presidency in the second half of the year and was instrumental in initiating the EU Troika meeting with the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in Lisbon. With an aim to generate positive spill-overs and to help the Portuguese government ensure that its newly found geostrategic interest in the Maghreb would lead to concrete, mainly economic benefits, destined to facilitate the identified need to diversify its trade relations, this was the first ever meeting of its kind with all five members of the AMU. Yet, Portugal failed to keep up the momentum inside the EU and thus sensitivize EU member states sustainably for the need to maintain and institutionalize this dialogue structure.

This is related not only to the then government’s pragmatic and short-term, yet narrow economic interests, but, arguably, also to Portugal’s generally low bargaining power within the EU. As a consequence, and in conjunction with Portugal’s limited resource endowment, the informal consensus that exists among the main political parties in Portugal that the pursuit and defence of its foreign (and external trade) policy interests are largely dependent on the support of supposedly more powerful partners and/or have to be channelled through multilateral cooperation/dialogue frameworks, explains why Portugal throughout the last 25 years, whenever southern neighbourhood-related initiatives were concerned, was more of a wilful follower than a true pro-active entrepreneur. Three examples substantiate this.

Already shortly after Portugal had joined the then EC, Portugal held the rotating EU Presidency and, during the European Council Summit in Lisbon on 26/27 June 1992, aligned itself with Spain and pushed for the creation of an EC–Maghreb Partnership. In contrast to Spain, Portugal saw this as a win-set that, strictly speaking, was destined to serve other, non-neighbourhood-related purposes. First, it provided the government of Cavaco Silva with an opportunity to demonstrate to its electorate its capability to push through ambitious foreign policy initiatives even though Portugal was a peripheral, relatively poor and small country that had joined the EC only a few years earlier. Second, while this alignment with Spain was cost-neutral for Portugal, it helped the purpose of avoiding marginalization on the EC/EU level – a feature that has been characterizing Portuguese foreign policy ever since Portugal joined the EC/EU (Dobrescu et al., 2016). Third, lending support to this originally Spanish initiative was a way to signal to its most important partner inside the EC/EU that Portugal can be relied upon, though this was linked to the strategic consideration that such reliance and support could ideally be capitalized upon in the future.

Increasingly alerted by growing instability in the southern neighbourhood, Portugal used the Western European Union Summit in May 1995 in Lisbon as another opportunity to safeguard its own (security-related) interests. Against the backdrop of a coastline of 1800km and a lack of resources to employ a national naval rapid response mechanism, Portugal was quick to understand that the Italian initiative to create a multinational maritime force that could engage in sea control, maritime patrolling, humanitarian missions, and crisis response operations would be conducive to the pursuit of its interests. Hence, Portugal's decision to align itself additionally also with Spain and France and to create Euromarfor through the adoption on 15 May 1995 of the Euroforces declaration of Lisbon proved considerably beneficial ever since. It integrated the Portuguese maritime forces into a non-permanent, but pre-structured cooperation format with other southern European EU member states that guarantees burden-sharing, training and knowledge exchange and, most of all, has been providing a powerful naval tool that can be rapidly deployed in front of the Portuguese coastline, in the Mediterranean and thus Europe's southern neighbourhood. At the same time, due to Euromarfor's potential utilization in the framework of the EU and NATO, Portugal has been pleasing its other European partners and allies, which increased its voice opportunity (Grieco, 1996) and generated status elevation.

The third example where Portugal opted for a mix of bandwagoning and initiative-taking occurred in the early 1990s in the context of the debates within NATO to create a Mediterranean Dialogue. Alarmed by signs that Iraq, which in 1990 had just invaded Kuwait, would station Scud missiles in Mauritania that could reach both Madeira and the Canary Islands, Portugal sided with Spain to lobby for an expansion of the then envisaged initiative beyond Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia (Winrow, 2003, p. 170) and provide Mauritania with an incentive to reject Iraq's attempts. In the end, these efforts bore fruit as NATO decided to include Mauritania into the new initiative. For Portugal, this meant an unequivocal net gain, as it did not only manage to contain a potential security threat emanating in the wider southern neighbourhood, but also to distribute the potential costs of this containment among its NATO allies.

Conclusions

As this article has demonstrated, southern neighbourhood-related foreign policy action of the six countries under study has not always been complementary with existing EU and NATO policy/dialogue frameworks. While Spain, with the support of Portugal, and most of the time also with Italy's support, has predominantly sought to Europeanize its region-related interests and proved to be most influential as far as the initiation of new multilateral frameworks are concerned, France on numerous occasions opted for go-alone approaches, thus turning a blind eye to existing policies, positions and/or channels. Even though president Sarkozy did present the creation of the UfM as a result of French entrepreneurship and a proof of France's restored rank in the world, the original MU proposal was destined to exclude the majority of EU member states and ignore the existence of both the EMP and the ENP. This attitude is rooted in France's colonial legacy in several parts of the southern neighbourhood and, at least during president Sarkozy's tenure, was inspired by the ambition to counter perceptions that French foreign policy was in a state of decline, according to the school of thought of "déclinologie" (Delgado, 2011). Similarly, Germany's foreign policy practices vis-à-vis Europe's southern neighbourhood have been influenced by its past, even though this applies almost exclusively to its relations with Israel, mainly as a result of the *Shoa*. Beyond Germany's increasingly self-imposed obligation to use both bilateral and multilateral channels to contribute both to the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the safeguarding of Israeli interests, this has, however, never resulted in a true utilization of neither EU nor NATO frameworks with respect to Europe's southern neighbourhood. In fact, like the UK, it

silently supported them as long as these did not infringe on their trade and security-related interests and put into question the strategic importance, at least within the EU, given to Europe's eastern neighbourhood, which both countries prioritize in their respective foreign policies. This explains why throughout the years, governments of both countries displayed signs of indifference towards the EMP and the ENP and, to lesser extent as far as Germany is concerned, NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue up until the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011. Uprisings in Europe's southern neighbourhood were, in fact, yet another proof of both countries' reluctance to advance existing multilateral cooperation/dialogue frameworks and thus engage in the likely disbursement of additional financial resources. Instead, they invested themselves considerably in opportunity-maximizing. Germany, under foreign minister Westerwelle, was at the forefront of those who reached out to the newly (and short-lived) ruling elites of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and En-Nahda in Tunisia, and by offering so-called transformation partnerships, hoped to influence domestic political developments in both countries, not least with a view to prevent potentially negative spill-overs that could result from failed transition processes. In the case of the UK, opportunity-maximizing was almost exclusively limited to Libya and the hope that, by supporting the National Transitional Council and the anti-Qaddafi movement militarily, financially and ideationally, Britain would be able to enlarge its presence in a post-Qaddafi Libya and push back Italy's influence and role in particular in the Libyan energy sector.

Thus, it can be concluded that even though, at least rhetorically, governments of all the six countries under study have formally committed themselves to existing southern-neighbourhood-related frameworks, such as the ENP, the EMP and the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, their respective foreign policy practices – with the exception of Portugal's – were at times subjected to competition rather than coordination and dialogue within multilateral fora. Arguably, Portugal was probably most effective in achieving its (limited) foreign policy objectives, followed by Italy and Spain, whereas France, the UK and Germany have not always been able to secure them through unilateral initiatives, policy entrepreneurship and fence-sitting. Moreover, these characteristics, competitive attitudes and a preference for the consolidation of alleged stability over unpredictable democratization processes in the southern neighbourhood have considerably contributed to the ineffectiveness of both the EMP and the ENP, in particular as far as political reforms and compliance with human rights by Europe's southern neighbours are concerned. However, for any multilateral initiative to generate viable results and thus be more effective – be it within the EU or NATO – the six countries under study and, in fact, all respective member states need to take their commitments more seriously.

Notes on contributors

Tobias Schumacher is Chairholder of the European Neighbourhood Policy Chair at the College of Europe, Natolin campus, Warsaw, and a Senior Research Associate at the Center for International Studies at the Lisbon University Institute (CEI-IUL).

Dimitris Bouris is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam, a Visiting Professor at the College of Europe, Natolin campus, Warsaw, and an Associate Research Fellow at the European Neighbourhood Policy Chair at the College of Europe, Natolin campus, Warsaw.

Maja Olszewska works with the European Neighbourhood Policy Chair of the College of Europe, Natolin campus, Warsaw.

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