

5th International Seminar on Security and Defence in the Mediterranean

Multi-Dimensional Security

Balance

The “5+5 security and defence” initiative.
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The “5 + 5 Security and Defence” Initiative had its second anniversary in December 2006. This paper reviews the foundations of the initiative, recalling the background of its development and, finally, takes stock of the project up to the end of 2006, thence to conclude by identifying the factors that have contributed to the initiative’s success.

Foundations of the “5 + 5 Security and Defence” Initiative

The Barcelona Process had its eighth anniversary in 2003, at which point it was manifestly clear that the results were disappointing. This is a highly original initiative since it is concerned with real cooperation rather than with aid, assistance or unilateral action but, unfortunately, while it was making slow progress with two of its three guiding principles, the area of “policy and security” was going nowhere.

Security and prosperity in the Mediterranean represent a major challenge for the coming years thanks to the crucial strategic interest of the area and also the close ties uniting the countries of its North and South shores. The latter Mediterranean zone, immediate southern neighbour of the European Union (EU), is important to Europe, in particular the four so-called Latin countries. Our futures are inevitably linked and we must pull together and support each other.

Hence, in September 2003, the idea arose of attempting to do, with a limited number of people, what was not being achieved with 35 members. The French Ministry of Defence proposed that we should settle for:

- A limited number of countries,
- A geographic area limited to the Western Mediterranean,
- Selected joint projects, on the basis of interests identified as common.

The Initiative aims to be both pragmatic and progressive with the goal of establishing, in the long term, a dynamic of consensus politics and exchanges in the Western Mediterranean. Eventually, this endeavour should be shared with the other Barcelona Process partners since the final objective is to revitalise the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

1. The "Dialogue 5 + 5", constituted at the Ministerial Meeting held on 10 October 1990 in Rome, inaugurated a process of general cooperation consisting of three areas: Policy and Security, Economic and Socio-cultural. The five countries of the Maghreb (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Libya) and five European countries of the Western Mediterranean Basin (France, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Malta) attended the meeting. Organised by the Foreign Affairs ministers, the first Heads of State and Government summit was held in Tunisia in December 2003.
2. The aim is to reduce the risks deriving from fraudulent use of the freedom of navigation on which Maritime Law is based, in particular the use of the seas for terrorist ends, and to prevent illegal exploitation of fishing zones, the transport of large quantities of drugs and other illegal trafficking. A further aim is to prevent or respond to catastrophes like contamination, shipwreck and maritime accidents.
3. In some cases of natural disasters, the contribution of the Armed Forces is indispensable and swift, well-coordinated intervention by friendly nations can limit their consequences.
4. The risk of air terrorism has a singular nature because the time in which preventive measures must be applied is very short. In this case, regional cooperation facilitating the foresight that is necessary for swift decision making should be sustained. This may take the form of activities of coordination and exchanges of information between military centres.

It very soon became evident that, in order to guarantee its chances of success, the Initiative would need to be open to the "5 + 5" member countries.¹ Accordingly, the aim was to establish an association restricted to ten countries that would together determine practical initiatives of joint endeavour in response to needs they would identify as shared, within a limited geographic space without major tensions.

If these goals, while modest, were achieved one might reasonably imagine that the positive experience could spread like an "oil slick", thereby gradually constructing a well-balanced association that is based on trust, wherein the different members would find shared interests that they themselves had identified.

Chronology of the Development of the Initiative

On 21 December 2004, the Ministers of Defence of the ten countries in question – Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia – signed in Paris the basic documents for the "security" entente in "5 + 5" format: the Declaration of Intentions, and the Action Plan for 2005.

The Declaration of Intentions, which establishes the framework, goals and ambitions of the initiative, stipulates that:

- The Ministers of Defence will meet once a year in order to assess the functioning of the Plan and to improve the Plan of Action for the following year.
- A Governing Committee, consisting of two appointees from the Defence Ministry of each country, will meet twice a year. The Committee is responsible for launching each action, carrying out follow-up of its implementation, and nominating *ad hoc* expert committees. At the annual ministers' meeting, the Committee must report on the progress of the implementation of the Plan of Action and propose priorities for the coming year.
- Finally, the *ad hoc* experts' committees will organise, when required, the seminars stipulated in the Action Plan.

The Declaration of Intentions perfectly reflects the guidelines that the ministers wished to introduce into the project whose "informal" nature requires a "light-handed" architecture.

The Action Plan determining the goals for 2005 stipulated coordinated activities and exchanges of information between military centres, with three main objectives in mind:

- Contribution by the Ministries of Defence to maritime vigilance² in the Mediterranean.
- Contribution by the Ministries of Defence to civil protection³ in the Mediterranean.
- Contribution by the Ministries of Defence to air security⁴ in the Mediterranean.

The Plan of Action is a response to the wishes expressed by the ministers. The actions agreed upon are specific and feasible in the short term, and are fruit of an approach that is based on association in a spirit of joint responsibility. They fall within the areas of common interest that are to serve as meeting points where experiences and knowledge can be shared.

The inaugural one-year Presidency was occupied by Algeria. The first Governing Committee meeting was held in Algiers, presided by Algeria, on 15 March 2005. The meeting approved, for 2005, the holding of a seminar in Spain on maritime vigilance attended by the Navy Chiefs of General Staff, two seminars on the military contribution to civil protection in Spain, and activities towards a Rome-based organisation of commercial shipping in the Mediterranean.

At the second meeting of the Governing Committee, held in Algeria in November 2005, the Presidency confirmed that the four planned activities had been carried out. These were undeniably modest initiatives and they were introduced by countries from the European shores of the Mediterranean, but they did substantiate the clear resolve of all the countries concerned to maintain a firm commitment to this new form of association.

The second Ministerial Meeting of the ten Ministers of Defence, held in Algiers on Monday 12 December 2005, enabled the adoption of the group's internal regulations and the formulation of the Plan of Action for 2006, this including fifteen activities, several of them in the countries of the Mediterranean's southern shores. In the discussion, a number of new spheres for possible joint action were raised:

- The struggle against locusts (Algeria);
- A landmine clearance training centre (Libya);
- Procedures for coordination of activities in case of natural disaster;
- Creation of a 5 + 5 leadership training school on the basis of shared experience;
- A virtual monitoring centre for maritime control (exchange of information).

The three main concerns of the seminars for 2006 were focused on the following areas:

- In the sphere of air monitoring: contribution of the armed forces in SAR.⁵
- In the sphere of the contribution of the armed forces to civil protection: deployment of the emergency sequence; support to civilian authorities.
- In the sphere of maritime monitoring: reflection on the joint establishment of detection and identification systems; struggle against pollution.

Finally, Italy opened its annual "Canale" exercise, organised in cooperation with Malta, to the other members of the 5 + 5 group. France was nominated to occupy the Presidency for 2006. The Governing Committee meeting held in Paris on 30 March, inaugurating the French presidency, accepted the following proposals:

6. CIMIC: Civil-military concept, equivalent to CMA (civil-military action).
7. VRMTC: Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre
8. CPX: Command post exercise.
9. IPC: Initial planning conference.
10. *Solidaridad*: Non-secure Internet Network of operations centres.
11. This centre would be based on the Italian V-RMTC (Virtual regional maritime traffic) system, a computer programme that permits Internet exchanges of non-classified information.

- Seven seminars: two (CIMIC⁶ and VRMTC⁷) proposed by Italy; one (landmine clearance) proposed by Libya; one (action against locusts) proposed by Algeria; one (aerial) proposed by France; one (maritime) proposed by Tunisia; and one (support for civilian authorities) proposed by Spain.
- A meeting of the Navy Chiefs of General Staff, proposed by France.
- Five exercises: one (civil protection) proposed by Portugal; two (General Staff CPX⁸) with a preparatory conference (IPC⁹) proposed by Spain, this including the *Solidaridad* (Solidarity) 06¹⁰ exercise; “Canale” proposed by Italy, with a debriefing conference; and one (Polmar) proposed by Morocco.
- A landmine clearance (landmines and unexploded ordnance) training centre proposed by Libya.
- A virtual centre for maritime monitoring in Italy.¹¹

All the member countries proposed activities except Mauritania and Malta, although the latter is a co-organiser of the “Canale” exercise.

The Governing Committee meeting held on 14 and 15 November in Nice confirmed that the fifteen exercises planned had been carried out. However, note was made of the need for the proposed exercises to fall directly within the 5 + 5 framework, without confusing them with other activities. The third ministerial meeting was held in Nice on 11 December 2006. On this occasion, the ministers stressed that the number and scope of activities should not be increased too quickly because of budgetary and availability considerations. The idea of a “5 + 5 school of security and defence” is still included among the projects but would adopt the form of a network of schools at the different levels possible, with the aim of promoting exchanges of experiences and points of view among officers. This kind of organisation already exists in European military establishments.

Italy has accepted the Presidency for 2007 and Libya will take over the chair in 2008.

First Assessment at the End of 2006

The ministers today are undoubtedly concerned with information exchanges and jointly organised actions. This is a first step. Nonetheless, the first joint General Staff or armed forces (Livex) exercises have been proposed. In fact, developments are so rapid that the pace should be measured in order not to exceed the organisational capacity of the organisation or possibilities for member participation. It is also necessary to look more fully into some areas so as not to commit conceptual errors that could lead to plans being rejected. This is the case, to give a specific example, of the group’s 5 + 5 school. Defining the parameters of this project requires prudence in the process of reaching agreement.

It must be emphasised, nevertheless, that the ten participating nations all have a special interest in the success of this “5 + 5”-format “defence and security” initiative because:

- It represents a true initiative in association where, for the first time, the options are the object of concerted action;

- It creates a meeting arena for the concerned parties of the Defence in the Maghreb;
- It can provide answers to the real need for practical cooperation;
- It constitutes the first step in the introduction of confidence-enhancing measures;
- It originates, in particular, with the countries of the Northern shores that have been able to define a common strategy, as well as being resolved to undertake the commitment.

An event that occurred in Algiers in March 2005 fully confirms this assessment. One night, the representatives of the Maghreb countries held a meeting outside the official framework in order to work on an agreed position on one specific matter. Since these were military men and, only a few months earlier at a conference in Spain, I had heard representatives from Algeria and Morocco state that their countries were “on a war footing”, the “5 + 5” initiative seems to be particularly hopeful.

In this regard, although the initiative is still engaged in very modest endeavours, it does appear to be a true testing ground for the area of “policy and security” of the Barcelona Process, and it is now in a position to be able to offer new dynamism to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the long term. The countries of the North are making an effort to present a united volition, while the countries of the South are working hard on promoting proposals. All of this creates the conditions of success for the initiative, which has not yet occurred with the Barcelona Process. The members as a whole therefore have the sensation that they are really giving life to an association in which each member contributes with proposals, while sharing responsibility for the tasks being carried out.

Conclusion: Factors in the Initiative’s Success

The cooperation between both shores of the Western Mediterranean has not yet materialised in very ostensible military operations. We have still not reached the point of engaging in joint maritime patrols, although it is possible to cite, as did the French Defence Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie in 2005, the example of an Algerian officer who boarded a Breguet-Atlantique, a maritime reconnaissance aircraft of the French Aeronaval Forces, in order to assist in identifying and following up on a suspect vessel that had been detected in the Mediterranean forty-eight hours earlier. However, it does not seem that there is any shared interest to date in engaging in any very advanced type of joint military endeavour. This basically depends on what the countries might identify as shared interests.

Yet, at present, it has been possible to identify areas of cooperation and to engage in joint actions deemed by the members as a whole to be in their interests. Is this not, in fact, what an association is really about? The “security and defence” initiative in 5 + 5 format once again offers an arena where Defence representatives from the ten partner countries can interact and work together, thereby getting to know each other, appreciating each other’s points of view and sharing perceptions. Is this not where the dynamics of the means of trust are to be found?

The initiative is progressive. It should be emphasised that, while the countries of the North are used to cooperation either among themselves or with countries of the South, the countries of the South have no real experience of South-South cooperation. On the contrary, mistrust is what has predominated for the most part. Prudence, therefore, is indispensable. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the basic reasons for the success of this process lie in:

- The wish of the parties involved to maintain the conditions of true association wherein everyone participates in decision-making, in discussing options and in sharing responsibilities. There is no place for unilateral actions, instrumental manoeuvres with barely concealed aims, paternalism or condescension deriving from an overwhelming difference in skills. Now, all at once, the South can have its own ideas.
- The determination of the countries of the North to find shared strategies, hence showing particular coherence in the orientations to be given.
- The modesty of members who are resolutely decided to opt for cooperative activities that are practical and specific, responding to needs that are identified as being shared and not aiming at excessively ambitious goals, which are doubtless secondary concerns with regard to the priorities of the countries of the South, in particular.

To conclude, the key, perhaps, is an ability to listen, an aptitude that requires delicacy in its application, especially when it is known where the strength lies and when there is also undue division with regard to the goals being pursued. There is no doubt.