

Security and cooperation through education and research in the Mediterranean Area

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The Mediterranean as a region remains a source of political and social instability. Most security issues in the region are currently driven by soft security socio-economic conditions rather than hard security politico-military factors. The EU's Barcelona Process and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue complement each other through their specific strength. The success of the Dialogue depends on the active participation and strong support by both EU/NATO and Dialogue countries alike, working together to build the trust and transparency required for a true partnership.

Introduction

For the first half century of its existence, NATO concentrated its attention on its eastern land borders. The main risks, or rather the real threat was properly perceived as coming from the East. Since the end of the Cold War and as part of its external adaptation, NATO has entered into a gradual process of rapprochement with its former adversaries with the aim of projecting stability in Central and Eastern Europe. The results of these initiatives can be seen today and they probably exceed what the most optimistic minds could have imagined at the beginning of this decade: three countries of Central Europe are now full members of our Alliance and all the others are active members of the Partnership for Peace Program and have a seat in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. At the Prague Summit seven nations (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and, Bulgaria) were invited to join and in March 2004 they joined the Alliance. Special relationships with Russia and with Ukraine have been established under the provisions of the respective charters.

North Africa and the Mediterranean have always been of secondary concern to NATO, and never considered as a likely front of conflict. Nevertheless, with the end of the Cold War and as the new democracies in the East consolidated and started their integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions, NATO changed the old concept of threat for the new one of risks and started paying more attention to its southern periphery.

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The Mediterranean Dialogue

“There can be no security in the Mediterranean without stability; there can be no stability without democracy; and there can be no democracy without development”.

Azouz Ennifar

At the end of 1994, NATO launched an initiative aimed at its southern neighbors and the term Mediterranean Dialogue was coined. Six countries joined the Dialogue initially, namely Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, which joined in February 1995, and Jordan, which joined in November 1995. Algeria became a participant in February 2000.

The Mediterranean Dialogue’s overall aim is to contribute to and promote regional security and stability by enhancing better mutual understanding between NATO and the Dialogue countries, as well as promoting regional security and stability.

The successful launch of the Mediterranean Dialogue and its subsequent development has been based upon five principles.¹ The Dialogue is progressive in terms of participation and substance. Such flexibility has allowed the number of Dialogue partners to grow – the inclusion of Jordan and Algeria - and the content of the Dialogue to evolve over time. The Dialogue is primarily bilateral in structure. Despite the predominantly bilateral character, the Dialogue allows for multilateral meetings on a regular basis (19+7). All Mediterranean partners are offered the same basis for cooperation activities and discussion with NATO. This is an essential feature of the Dialogue; countries are free to choose the extent and intensity of their participation. The Dialogue is meant to mutually reinforce and complement other international efforts such as the EU’s Barcelona Process (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) and the OSCE’s Mediterranean Initiative. Activities within the Dialogue take place on a self-funding basis. However, in May 2000 Allies agreed to consider – on a case-by-case basis – requests for financial assistance in support of Mediterranean partners’ participation in the Dialogue.

Under the supervision of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG) was established at the Madrid Summit in July 1997, which has the overall responsibility for the Mediterranean Dialogue. This created a forum involving Allied member states directly in the political discussions with Dialogue countries, in which views could be exchanged on a range of issues relevant to the security situation in the Mediterranean, as well as on the future development of the Dialogue.

At the Washington Summit in April 1999, Alliance leaders decided to enhance both the political and practical dimensions of the Dialogue. Among other things this created further opportunities for discussion and for strengthening cooperation in areas where NATO can bring added value. This applies particularly in the military field, and in other areas where Dialogue countries have expressed interest.

The southern Mediterranean area can be divided into two distinct regions, the Western Mediterranean and the Middle East. It encompasses three crucial strategic points: the Straits of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal and the Straits of Bab el-Mendeb.² Events in the region have crucial implications for the rest of Africa and Europe. These regions include different potential sources of political and social instability. For European NATO countries, social issues in the Western Mediterranean area constitute a more direct concern. The main common characteristics of the Western Mediterranean area are the Arabic language, the overwhelming acceptance of Islam, and the historical ties with the Arab world and Mediterranean Europe.

The main features of the Mediterranean region are the growing economic disparity and demographic differences between the Mediterranean Dialogue Countries and Europe. The consequences of these are important for European NATO countries, because there is significant interdependence between European and the Mediterranean Dialogue countries. NATO countries bordering the Mediterranean (Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey) have significant interests in supporting the Dialogue and generating interest in enhanced support of the Dialogue throughout the rest of NATO.

The disparity that exists between north and south as far as economic development and prosperity are concerned has become so acute that the Mediterranean has become a real dividing line between the North and the South.

Northern Mediterranean countries are active in reinforcing stability in North Africa; some are helping North African governments to combat extremism and to promote development by encouraging private investment, removing trade barriers for locally manufactured products and reviewing the debt problem more realistically.

The other major issue in the Mediterranean region is the ongoing conflict between Israel, the Palestinians and other Arab countries. This conflict fosters fundamentalism that also threatens NATO countries with terrorism. As shown on September 11, all these threats have both direct and indirect implications on NATO's interests. Until a lasting solution of this issue is found, it will continue to divide the Middle East and North Africa and limit efforts to build economic, social and political stability in the Mediterranean area.

Extremism poses a threat to both democracy and the aspirations of democratic governments in the region as well as to the social stability of the Northern and Southern

Mediterranean littorals. The establishment of extremist regimes would generate economic and social instability, and the resulting mass migration could create tensions between Europe and Med Dialogue countries.

At the Prague Summit the NATO Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that security in Europe is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean. They also decided to upgrade substantially the political and practical dimensions of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue as an integral part of the Alliance's co-operative approach to security. Finally, they reiterated that the Mediterranean Dialogue and other international efforts, including the EU Barcelona process, are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

As already as the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, trade agreements – association agreements – had been signed with Turkey, Cyprus and Malta. Gradually, other countries became EU partners: Algeria, Morocco, Israel, etc. Following the Gulf War in 1990, a number of agreements began to be revised. These agreements offered far more favorable terms to the EU's Mediterranean partners than previous ones had done. This has been termed the Renewed Mediterranean Policy. Lasting peace and an effective security system cannot be achieved unless the negotiated conditions are compatible with the Mediterranean countries' own aspirations.

The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue complements those other related but distinct international initiatives under the auspices of the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It offers all Mediterranean partners the same basis for discussion and for joint activities and aims to reinforce other international efforts involving Mediterranean Dialogue countries, such as those undertaken by the Barcelona process, the Middle East peace process and the OSCE, without either duplicating such efforts or intending to create a division of labour.

The Istanbul Summit marks the seventh gathering heads of state and government since 1990 to contemplate the future course of the Alliance. It is seen as an opportunity to continue a successful transformation, despite current tensions in the aftermath of the Iraq War, the Alliance rests on a bedrock of common values and largely convergent security interests. There are several important topics the Summit will address, the future of PfP, Mediterranean Dialogue, and the enhanced cooperation with the most important strategic partners, Russia and Ukraine.

Enhancing security and cooperation through education and research

Many books, articles and political commentary have been published on the subject of Mediterranean Dialogue. Some writers have tried to establish a parallel between what NATO did and is still doing with its eastern neighbors and what could be done with those of North Africa. But the vast differences between these two scenarios have also been apparent. The prospect of achieving in the Mediterranean area similar results and similar success to those obtained in the countries of Central and Eastern European countries has been rated as highly unlikely, at least in the short or medium term.

NATO's Mediterranean Initiative has at least two important elements in common with the action developed within the context of the Partnership for Peace Program. First, its objective of projecting security and stability and, second, the gradual approach, that is, the purpose of starting with soft security initiatives, such as informal dialogue, organization of seminars, invitation to NATO Defense College courses (Senior Course and IPOC) or to peacekeeping exercises as observers, in an attempt to create an environment of transparency and mutual trust that could eventually lead to more ambitious undertakings. All such efforts aim to promote security and stability, to increase mutual trust and greater understanding, and to foster confidence.

Practical level of cooperation

Beside its primarily political objectives, the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) aims also at pursuing practical cooperation. The annual MD Work Programme (MDWP) specifically intended for MD countries is established with the overall aim of building confidence through cooperation.³

The 2003 MDWP – according to the Prague Document – foresees practical cooperation between NATO and its Mediterranean partners activities in the following areas: science and environment affairs, crisis management, defense policy and strategy, de-mining, small arms and light weapons, border security, fight against terrorism, consultation on WMD, defense economies, information, civil emergency planning and cooperation on military field.

From the very beginning, NATO Defense College has been the spearhead of all allied efforts to create an environment of transparency and mutual trust in the Mediterranean basin. The College is the host and organizer of international research seminars on Med Dialogue issues. The resulting publication and seminar reports can be found on the official website of the NDC.⁴

NATO Defence College activities⁵

The annual MDWP includes a MD Military Program (MDMP). The Military Programme is mainly focusing on educational and training activities offered annually to MD partners (observe military exercises, attend seminars, workshops etc.)

The majority of the academic and research activities organized by the NATO Defence College are open to the participation of Mediterranean Dialogue partners.

Between the most important elements of each nation's armed forces are the preparedness, education and training of its personnel. In one word it is the intellectual and practical value and potential. The basic scene of the creation and increase of that intellectual potential are the educational institutions – military and civil, internal and international ones, places and assignments of service, where one could get the necessary no other means and ways obtainable practical knowledge and skills.

The regular participation on conferences, seminars, courses, the mutual information, the flow of information can be helpful in gaining international military experiences, to have a real understanding about the position, role, career opportunities, work and life circumstances of other countries fellow-men.

IPOC and Senior Course

The NATO Defense College since 1992 organizes “Integrated Partnership for Peace, OSCE Course”, which stands for IPOC. Since November 1999 the IPOC has been offered to Mediterranean Dialogue countries, too.⁶

The IPOC study period during 4–14 May 2004 was the 9th time that Mediterranean Dialogue Members participated the course. The aims of this study period are: to improve the knowledge and understanding of the internal and external adaptations of the Alliance and the developments regarding its new missions and new international environment; to contribute to the Partnership for Peace and Mediterranean Dialogue programs through participation in a combined NATO/PfP/OSCE/ Mediterranean Dialogue educational activity; and to improve PfP, OSCE and Mediterranean Dialogue participants' knowledge and understanding of NATO's politico-military concept, its organization and working methods.

As far as the Senior Course is concerned, the first time that officers from Mediterranean Dialogue were invited was for SC 103, 1 September 2003 – 5 February 2004. The NATO Defense College had one officer coming from Algeria and another one from Tunisia attending the course. The Mediterranean Region has always been an important region for the Alliance. Senior courses during their committee study project work focused on the region, which emphasize the region's strategic importance, and its impact on the Alliance.⁷

Conference of Commandants

Another important instrument of building trust and enhancing cooperation between NATO and Mediterranean Dialogue countries is the Conference of Commandants (CoC). The CoC of the Defence Colleges of the Alliance was set up on the initiative of Vice-Admiral J. C. O'Brien (Canada).⁸ The first Conference was held in Rome from 24–26 May 1972.

The Conference has a dual purpose. Firstly, to permit the exchange of information between military authorities who share identical responsibilities in the field of military higher education, in order to encourage improvements in curricula and teaching methods. Secondly, to encourage the development of cooperation in the field of military higher education between Colleges in NATO countries and their counterparts in Central and East European and Mediterranean Dialogue countries.

As a result of the fundamental changes to the security environment in the late 1980s, the Conference was given an important new dimension. The Conference was enlarged in 1992 to include a number of PfP/OSCE countries. It was further enlarged in 2000 to include the Mediterranean Dialogue partners. At the last Conference 35 nations were present.⁹ The Mediterranean Dialogue countries and their military institutions are parts of the CoC community.¹⁰

Research and Fellowship Program

The NATO Defense College offers four research fellowships each year in the fields of social and political science. The objective is to promote scholarly research in areas of particular interest to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), members of the Partnership for Peace Program, and those involved with NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue Program.

In support of these programs the NDC makes available two fellowships for applicants from PfP countries and two fellowships for applicants from Mediterranean Dialogue partner countries each year. Each fellowship lasts four months and each fellow receives a stipend to cover his or her expenses while conducting research at the NDC. Since the Program's inception in 1993, the College has awarded a total of 27 research fellowships, including seven to citizens of Mediterranean Dialogue countries (Egypt, Mauritania, Israel, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan) that joined the program in 2000.¹¹

Conclusion

The Mediterranean as a region remains a source of political and social instability. Historic tensions are dominant in the Mediterranean, adding further to the new security challenges that have emerged after September 11. Most security issues in the region are currently driven by soft security socio-economic conditions rather than hard security politico-military factors.

The EU's Barcelona Process and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue complement each other through their specific strength. The first step would be a joint EU/NATO Mediterranean Process, which should include all countries of the region – the Palestinian territories, Syria and Lebanon - and “the cooperation should focus on four main priorities: security and politics; the economy; law and culture; civil society.¹² The partnership in law and culture includes cooperation in education and training.

In order understand the complexity of the Mediterranean Region; NATO needs the intellectual keys to open the door. The Arab Human Development Report 2003 issued by the United Nations Development Programme¹³ underlines the importance of modern education and emphasizes the strategic vision of a knowledge-based society.

The success of the Dialogue depends on the active participation and strong support by both EU/NATO and Dialogue countries alike, working together to build the trust and transparency required for a true partnership. Cooperation in education and research help to achieve the interoperability of the minds, the ability to accept, understand, and appreciate different national cultures.

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2. For detailed description of the strategic positions and choke points in the Mediterranean see I. Vormann: NATO's star rises in the Med, *Proceedings*, 1995 March pp. 73–78.
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There is a special Mediterranean Dialogue Internet web-module on NATO's web site (<http://www.nato.int/med-dial/home.htm>). It provides information on NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, studies and conferences' reports; speeches of NATO officials; and NATO official documents on Mediterranean Dialogue releasable to the public.
At their meeting in Reykjavik in May 2002, NATO Foreign Ministers decided to upgrade the political and practical dimensions of our Mediterranean Dialogue. For more details visit the following website: <http://www.nato.int/med-dial/upgrading.htm>
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5. For more information on the NATO Defense College link to www.ndc.nato.int
 6. Between 1999 November – 2003 November 26 course members coming from the Mediterranean Region attended the IPOC course (Egypt 4, Algeria 2, Jordan 2, Mauritania 7, Morocco 5, Tunisia 6).
 7. Just to name a few study project titles: The strategic importance of the Mediterranean area to NATO; The future of the Mediterranean; The Arab-Israeli conflict and its impact on the situation in the Mediterranean; Security Interests in the Mediterranean; The Mediterranean – future challenges for NATO?; Mediterranean Dialogue – another PfP Programme?; Will NATO be ready to confront future challenges in the Mediterranean region?; The Impact of the Mediterranean Dialogue on the Transatlantic Link; The future role of NATO in the Mediterranean basin; NATO and the Maghreb countries: proposals for the future; NATO's Mediterranean dialogue: options and possibilities for the future.
 8. He was the Commandant of the NATO Defense College from 1970 to 1973. The idea of the CoC came from Rear Admiral S. Mathwin DAVIS, who was Commandant of the Canadian Defence College at the time.
 9. The Conference was held in Sofia on 22–24 March 2004 at the G.S. Rakovski Defense and Staff College.
 10. Algeria: Algerian Ecole d'Application Militaire, Institut Supérieur pour les Etudes de Sécurité Nationale; Egypt: Nasser Higher Military Academy, Israel: National Defense College (<http://www.idf.il>), Jordan: Royal Jordanian War College; Mauritania: Adjoint Armée Mauritanienne, Morocco: Centre for Strategic Studies, Tunisia: Institut de Défense Nationale.
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