

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and Arab States, Themes, Dimensions and Challenges

Sami Al-Khazendar *

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to identify and understand the future relationship between the NATO's Mediterranean policy and the Arab World.

It tries to examine the themes, dimensions and the leading obstacles and challenges that influence the relationship between the two sides, and how this relationship affects security and political stability in the region.

The main themes of this paper are: NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: What and Why?

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Structure and Mechanisms .Why the Initiative: Importance, Purposes and Fears?

How Did the Concerned Arab States Receive NATO's Initiative and How Did their Positions in This Regard Change?

Where do NATO Members Stand Regarding NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue?

NATO and the Iraqi Crisis.

Finally, The Mediterranean Dialogue: Challenges and Obstacles.

The scope of the study starts from the beginning of the NATO's Mediterranean Initiative in the mid of 1990s to the first decade of the 21 century .

KEYWORDS: NATO Strategy in the Middle East, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative- Mediterranean Politics, NATO and the Middle East, NATO's Role in the Mediterranean, NATO and the Iraqi crisis and NATO and the Arab World.

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War has brought about fundamental changes in NATO's priorities, role, tasks and membership expansion. The Alliance's objectives, concepts and policies have also witnessed profound change. These changes are best reflected in the birth of new programs of various activities that go in harmony with NATO's interests and operation areas. Javier Solana, the former NATO Secretary General ,who led the Alliance through this phase of change, described the essence of the change and how it has affected NATO's role and tasks by saying "the Alliance has moved from confrontation to cooperation and partnership with the

countries of central and Eastern Europe, including Russia, Ukraine and other countries formerly part of the Soviet Union⁽¹⁾". NATO leaders, in their 1997 Madrid Summit Declaration, discussed this stage of development. They argued that "The Alliance has moved from being a passive provider of deterrence and defense to being an active promoter of cooperation and partnership with other countries"⁽²⁾. One basic aspect of this change is the release of several political, military and security initiatives. The 1994 Partnership for Peace (PfP) Initiative, which seeks to develop cooperative links with East Europe and some Scandinavian states, stands as NATO's first initiative priority.⁽³⁾ The 1994 Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue is another significant NATO initiative.⁽⁴⁾

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* Department of Political Sciences, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan. Received on 7/4/2004 and Accepted for Publication on 16/12/2004.

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NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: What and Why?

NATO believes that the security of Europe in general and the south of Europe in particular is closely linked to the security and stability in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean dimension is one of a number of components of the European security structure.⁽⁵⁾ It is not surprising; therefore, that NATO has taken practical steps to organize its links with non-member Mediterranean states in general and the Arab World in particular.

The developments of the Middle East peace process between some Arab states and Israel have, as indicated by the 1994 Brussels Summit, motivated the international community (including NATO) to exert efforts and adopt some initiatives that aim at promoting regional stability by supporting the peace process. Hence, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative, which is also known as NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue has been established. At their meeting in December 1994, NATO Foreign Ministers declared the release of contacts, on a case-by-case basis, with non-member Mediterranean states. In February 1995, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania and Israel were invited to participate in the NATO's Dialogue initiative. A similar invitation was extended to Jordan in November 1995. Algeria became the latest member in February 2000.

In an additional development witnessed by the Initiative at the Prague Summit of NATO (21-22 November 2002), the Secretary General of NATO, Lord Robertson, reflected this development during his talks with the president of Algeria, saying at the end of the Prague Summit that "NATO Heads of state and Government decided to upgrade the political and practical dimensions of the Mediterranean Dialogue."⁽⁶⁾

In December 2003, NATO's foreign ministers added yet another dimension to the Initiative when they agreed to look for appropriate channels to change the Initiative into "partnership," indicating that "Security in the Euro-Atlantic area is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean. We look for additional progress beyond that has been achieved since the Prague Summit in upgrading the Mediterranean Dialogue. We direct the

Council in Permanent Session to consider ways to further enhance this relationship by generating, in consultation with all Mediterranean Dialogue partners, by the time of the Istanbul Summit (2004) options to develop a more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue. This initiative will genuinely improve cooperation in a number of fields, including defense reform and interoperability, and open more Partnership activities to the Mediterranean Dialogue partners on a case by case basis."⁽⁷⁾

Meeting in Istanbul (June 2004), NATO leaders decided to elevate the Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue to a genuine partnership and to launch the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). ICI is a new initiative which is meant to promote essentially practical cooperation, on a bilateral basis, with interested countries in the broader region of the Middle East, starting with countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

There is no doubt that the latest developments, particularly expressed at the Prague Summit and Istanbul meeting, are an outcome of the international developments following the September 11 attacks and the War on Afghanistan and Iraq.

Regarding the Initiative's content and objectives, as outlined by NATO's official literature, particularly the 1997 Madrid Summit, the Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue aims at:⁽⁸⁾

- Contributing to the security and stability of the Mediterranean.⁽⁹⁾
- Achieving a better mutual understanding.
- Correcting the misperceptions that the concerned Arab countries bear about NATO. This objective does not address Israel, which does not have any misperceptions about the Alliance.

The Mediterranean Dialogue consists of the following elements:

- Political dialogue, and
- Mutual participation in specific activities that can be classified into two basic groups: security-military, and development.⁽¹⁰⁾

Political dialogue, as defined in NATO's official literature⁽¹¹⁾, means conducting regular bilateral political discussions, on a case-by-case basis, between NATO and Mediterranean states. Further multilateral meetings can also be considered. Such talks are envisaged to provide non-member participating Mediterranean countries with the opportunity to get familiar with NATO's activities and programs, including its structural changes meant to

adapt to the new developments and its general approach to building a cooperative security structure. In their turn, non-member Mediterranean Dialogue countries are expected to share their views with NATO on stability and security in the Mediterranean.

As for the participation of the Mediterranean Dialogue countries in NATO specific activities, NATO extended invitations to these states to take part in activities related to:

1. **Development:** This includes aspects of the environment, technology, and science. More specifically, it includes collaboration in scientific research, seminars and grants. It also includes expert visits, combating environmental problems and supporting the infrastructure needed for developing cooperation in the field of science and technology. A new area of research and scientific cooperation was released after September 11 attacks. It involves the role of civil science in the fight against terrorism, and how the NATO Science Program might act best in combating terrorism and other new threats to security and stability.⁽¹²⁾
2. **Information:** This area aims at introducing NATO programs, role and activities by a specialized NATO Press Office. In addition, there is a special department for public affairs and relations that has the Mediterranean Dialogue states as part of its domain of interests. This department executes media activities to promote NATO programs, role and tasks in the Mediterranean either by disseminating relevant information through publications, visual tapes, and the Internet, or by holding conferences and providing visit opportunities for academics, media people, and institutions of civil society .
3. **Civil Emergency Planning and Crisis Management:** These areas deal with means of facing emergencies and disasters at times of war and peace alike.
4. **Military Dimension:** The general tendency now is for the Mediterranean Dialogue states to participate in peacekeeping troops, whether practically or theoretically, through taking part in NATO academic schools that offer courses on areas of peacekeeping, arms control, and the role of military forces in environment protection. Interested Mediterranean countries are expected to take care of their participation expenses.

Concerning the general context of participation in the military dimension as viewed by NATO decisions,

literature and interests, one can add two more fields: fighting terrorism, and cooperating with the Mediterranean Dialogue states to keep these countries free of all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).⁽¹³⁾ This means that military participation falls under the umbrella of collaboration in developing regional security and stability rather than military cooperation. However, Arab states still view this issue with a sensitive eye. The Alliance has, therefore, been calling for increasing mutual transparency in the field of military cooperation and relations as a means for a better mutual understanding as well as for eradicating all doubts particularly those shown by Arab Mediterranean states towards NATO. Some Alliance marine troops, therefore, made several visits to some of the Dialogue states such as Morocco and Mauritania in April 2001. Also, a NATO military delegation conducted a military visit to Tunisia on 27-29 January 2002. Furthermore, an Alliance Command Delegation completed the first ever Mobile Training Team (MTT) in Algeria. This training program was conducted during the period 2-7 March 2002 at the Algerian Defense Academy. It covered a group of about 50 Algerian officers. In some cases, NATO launched joint marine exercises with countries like Mauritania.⁽¹⁴⁾

It is worth noting that the September 11 attacks have changed the issue of combating terrorism into one of the most basic elements of the Initiative. In his talks with the Algerian president in December 2002, the Secretary General summed up the effect of this event and the Prague Summit on the Initiative's cooperation aspects by saying that " there has been a very dramatic increase in our dialogue since the 11th of September since the Southern Mediterranean countries have got unique experience of the kind of terrorism that manifested itself on the 11th of September. And the program that was decided in Prague is to have tailored programs with the individual countries, depending on their needs and their requests to look at issues like military reform, and indeed cooperation on terrorism and intelligence sharing which will be to the mutual benefit of the NATO countries and the countries of the Mediterranean."⁽¹⁵⁾

These comments, however, raise deep fears that the basic essence of the Dialogue Initiative might ultimately become the result of "the emphasis on the continuity of the present military action in the war against terrorism."⁽¹⁶⁾

In short, the components of the Mediterranean Dialogue, whether at the political level or at the level of

participating in specific NATO activities, delineate the benefits which the Mediterranean Dialogue provides the participating Arab states with.

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Structure and Mechanisms

The initiative was first released at the NATO December 1994 Brussels Summit. NATO Foreign Ministers activated the decision by directing the Council in Permanent Session to develop the details of the Dialogue and to launch preliminary talks with the Mediterranean Dialogue states. At a later stage, NATO extended official invitations to the Mediterranean Dialogue states in February 1995. Jordan received an invitation in November 1995. In the year 2000, Algeria too was invited. But the turning point in the development process of the Initiative was marked by the Madrid Summit in June 1997. The Madrid Summit laid out the Dialogue's general framework and the relevant major details. It had also set up the organizational structure and the practical institutional mechanisms required for the Dialogue through establishing a Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG). MCG is a committee (or a council) that comprises all NATO member countries and the six Mediterranean Dialogue states (and any possible subsequent participants). MCG, which is presided by NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and run by an Acting Chairman, reports directly to the North Atlantic Council. The Group is an advisory and coordinating body on mutual opinions and suggestions regarding Mediterranean issues. Therefore, its decisions are not mandatory for members. Meetings are held at the level of political advisors from NATO and representatives of the Mediterranean Dialogue states. A staff of various information, military and political departments supports this group⁽¹⁷⁾. The establishment of such organizational means has definitely added a dynamic and institutional dimension to the Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue.

Furthermore, there are NATO+7 consultation meetings on the military program. The meetings, which involve military representatives from seven Mediterranean Dialogue countries, are held twice a year.

NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NPA)⁽¹⁸⁾ has also contributed to the organization of the Mediterranean Dialogue through the setting up of a Mediterranean Special Group (MSG) that reports to the Political

Committee of NATO Parliament. The Group has assigned many Spanish and Italian chairpersons. Being responsible for the follow up and activation of Mediterranean Dialogue affairs, MSG has released a lot of regular reports or Annual Sessions on NATO-Mediterranean relations. MSG had also made several visits to the Mediterranean. The MSG visit to Egypt in 1999 was to participate in a seminar attended by prominent Egyptian officials and academics as well as by representatives of NATO and the Mediterranean Dialogue countries.⁽¹⁹⁾

Why the Initiative: Importance, Purposes and Fears⁽²⁰⁾

As previously indicated, the international changes in the 1990s, marked by the end of the Cold War, have brought about changes to the role and tasks of NATO. Its role and tasks have changed from a mechanism for defense and military combat to means for cooperation and partnership with other countries. The military and security roles of the Alliance have also acquired a political dimension. Because of their strategic significance for European security in general and the security of NATO Mediterranean members in particular, the countries of the Mediterranean have become part of NATO's priorities at this stage. In the wake of NATO's successful enlargement program and the Alliance's success in containing East Europe through a new cooperative framework known as the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean-NATO relations and the Mediterranean-NATO securities were strongly present at the Madrid Summit.

The new comprehensive security concept, developed at the 1991 and 1999 NATO Summits in Rome and Washington, is not restricted to the military/security dimension. Rather, it also addresses other security dimensions that cover political, social and economic aspects. The Mediterranean has consequently become an inevitable security variable that can negatively affect the security of NATO and Europe through the issues of labor migration and violence caused by socioeconomic and political problems in the Mediterranean as well as by the developments of the Palestinian Question, and the Western bias to the favor of Israel. Moreover, the 1995 Barcelona Declaration announced the birth of the European-Mediterranean Partnership Program, thus making the European Union (EU) more related and

interested in the Mediterranean and more responsive to the region's problems, situations and interests.⁽²¹⁾ NATO was indirectly affected by EU new trends in light of the fact that most NATO members are also EU members. In more specific words, the security agenda of the EU towards the Mediterranean affects its NATO counterpart – a fact that calls for greater coordination between the two organizations in dealing with Mediterranean issues.

"NATO and the European Union are working together to prevent and resolve crises and armed conflicts in Europe and beyond. They share common strategic interests and cooperate in a spirit of complementarity and partnership".⁽²²⁾

The scope of NATO's post-Cold-War security concept about the Mediterranean has been expanded so as to include not only the areas of hard security (such as the proliferation of WMD, terrorism, and combating drug trafficking) but also areas of soft security that deals with social, political and economic security-related issues.

A semi official study summarizes the main factors of the new Mediterranean security concept that played a decisive role in launching the NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. Spain, one should remember, was the most active in formulating the general philosophy of the Concept. These factors and considerations are:⁽²³⁾

1. Demography: Europe has explicitly voiced concern over the rapid Mediterranean population growth rate that could lead to a giant population gap between the two regions. Similar fears were expressed regarding the 30% rate that the youth are expected to constitute in 2025 according to estimations by the United Nations and the World Bank.⁽²⁴⁾ From a Western point of view, the deteriorating political economic situations in the Mediterranean might create a state of political instability in the region and push labor there to migrate to the West in search for employment.
2. Energy: The West is deeply interested in ensuring the flow of Mediterranean oil and gas. So, any regional or national political instability must be prevented. NATO, therefore, realizes that it has a role to play in protecting the sources of energy that Europe and America depend on, although America and some European countries are currently responsible for this task. In terms of energy, the "Dialogue on the security dimensions of energy trade and use could emerge as a promising area for NATO in its own Mediterranean Initiative,"⁽²⁵⁾

3. Cultural security (or security of identity): The cultural differences between the Arab Mediterranean states and the West (Europe and America) sometimes lead to some fears of the phenomenon of "cultural conflict", particularly with the emergence of religious fanaticism in both sides. These fears are intensified by the existing differences between Turkey and the EU as well as by the effect of the cultural dimension on the Arab-Islamic communities in the West and the cultural influence it may have over the traditions of the Western culture or the process of cultural integration. Hence, arises the West's need for a role played by its own institutions in the Dialogue. Consequently, "Any attempt to deepen NATO's engagement in a dialogue across the Mediterranean will need to address issues of identity as part of a broader public information strategy".⁽²⁶⁾
4. Hard security problems: Representing the other face of issues not involved in soft security, hard security covers issues related to terrorism and the proliferation of WMD and long-range missile systems, specially that Europe falls within the range of such systems. It is apparent that NATO is concerned with these issues because they relate to the security of its members rather than that of the Mediterranean, particularly that Israel possesses such weapons and systems. Any threat of military conflict by the southern Mediterranean states against northern Europe is, in fact, groundless and by no means a real one. As a matter of fact, it can be attributed to the political and security instability, as well as the socioeconomic features that some of these countries experience.

The April 1999 Washington Summit summarizes all these considerations: "The security of the Alliance remains subject to a wide variety of military and non-military risks which are multi-directional and often difficult to predict. These risks include uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area and the possibility of regional crises at the periphery of the Alliance, which could evolve rapidly. Some countries in and around the Euro-Atlantic area face serious economic, social and political difficulties. Ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, and the dissolution of states can lead to local and even regional instability. The resulting tensions could lead to crises affecting Euro-

Atlantic stability. They could also lead to human suffering and armed conflicts. Such conflicts could affect the security of the Alliance by spilling over into neighboring countries, including NATO countries, and could also affect the security of other states⁽²⁷⁾.

Then Italy's Foreign Minister, Lamberto DINI, made briefly the argument about the main reasons behind NATO's commitment to the Mediterranean Dialogue: "The region is increasingly at the center of various dynamics from North to South and from East to West. ... the case of the energy sector, given its implications also for the Alliance – as the term "energy security" clearly indicates."⁽²⁸⁾

In addition, the Mediterranean is considered as a strategic intersection point between the Arabian Gulf and Caspian Sea. At the same time, the Mediterranean region suffers from instability owing to the Palestinian and Iraqi questions, not to mention the fact that some countries suffer from certain local problems that not only threaten internal stability but regional stability as well. Europe can by no means ignore the problems of a "next door" region. The Italian minister, hence, stresses the urgent need for a NATO interest in the Mediterranean, particularly for two reasons: First NATO's rich experience in security issues. Second the need for mutual interaction and understanding to shake off the state of misunderstanding and mistrust between the Mediterranean countries and some NATO members.

Furthermore, NATO, says the Minister, "is now also turning to the consolidation of peace and stability in neighboring areas (with peacekeeping operations and crisis management) and is preventing and containing new "widespread threats", such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ethnic conflicts, organized crime, environmental threats, etc. These current dynamic elements are all present to varying degrees in the Mediterranean region."

The possible threat of the Mediterranean was also expressed by a US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs, who said "Today the real threat to European security comes not from the northern region, where much of the Alliance's attention is now focused, but in the south, where existing conflicts and potential for catastrophe are pervasive."⁽²⁹⁾

An interested Italian retired officer says that "one fact is certain: there will be no stable European security system if there is no stable Mediterranean region"⁽³⁰⁾ In December 2002, NATO foreign ministers emphasized

this concept saying that "Security in the Euro-Atlantic area is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean".

Commenting on the relationship between the region and the Alliance towards the end of the 1980s, a retired Arab military General says that "The Middle East is just adjacent to the Alliance's geographical boundaries and affects the prosperity of the Alliance states."⁽³¹⁾

Undoubtedly, there have been attempts to overestimate the resources of security threats coming from the Arab Mediterranean states. Many studies and comments on the Mediterranean–NATO relations have overestimated the issue. Though not entirely denied, these predictions have been deliberately exaggerated to fulfill suspicious purposes that could be related to the issue of political dominance over the area and the desire to neutralize any opponent political trends. In addition, there are pro-Israel calls that seek to support Israel and its security role in the region.

How Did the Concerned Arab States Receive NATO's Initiative and How Did their Positions in This Regard Change?

The six Arab participant countries (Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Jordan, and Algeria) first showed different enthusiasm and interaction with NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. They showed different reservations, fears and interests regarding the principles and programs offered by the Initiative. This can be attributed to the fact that the Cold War had developed many Arab suspicions, misperceptions and a state of mistrust towards the role played by NATO as a Western deterrent means. Such position was further intensified due to the absence of any NATO–Arab interaction. Moreover, the absence of external security challenges against the Arab World gave the sense that Arab countries could do without NATO. On the other hand, the Israeli threat posed the major challenge for Arabs. The support that Israel received from the West, i.e. NATO member countries, played a role in mounting Arab "NATO phobia." At present, however, these countries have, after overcoming a lot of their past fears, adopted more positive positions towards the Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue. The change is the result of the following fundamental developments at the level of international political arena:

The Western dominance over the New World Order, the collapse of communism and the Eastern block, and

the end of the Cold war.

On the regional level, the following reason can be considered: The basic regional changes represented by the peace process with Israel, and the Arab–Israeli peace treaties and talks.

The concerned Arab states have different aims and purposes behind their participation in the Dialogue. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Enhancing and developing ties with rich and technologically advanced Western states . An element which could lead Arab states to benefit from the economic assistance and scientific development from the Western states. Egypt, for example, showed interest in de-mining fields, while Mauritania was interested in issues related to water treatment, environment-protection, and deforestation problems.
2. Cementing foreign political weight particularly at the regional level by seeking foreign “assistance” from the greatest international military organization, NATO.
3. Adapting to the New World Order at the international level by displaying some sort of harmony with a one-country- dominated world.
4. Expressing the last point in a direct manner, a prominent Arab politician says that “Arabs have accepted NATO’s Initiative out of their desire to satisfy the “American Boss” as a way to ensure US support and protection, particularly that there is little or no trust in the possibility of designing an Arab Defense System that is capable of protecting their regimes.”⁽³²⁾
5. Some Arab regimes feel anxious about the instability of their internal situations. As a result, they have moved to consolidate their legitimacy and to ensure an international backup especially for their quest to fight “terrorism and its foreign financial roots”. The desire for military cooperation with NATO, though, falls at the bottom of the goals which the concerned Arab states target.

The Arab states showed different responses that developed later to advanced levels of interest and interaction. The NATO Parliament Mediterranean Secondary Committee, an offshoot of the Parliamentary Political Committee (which has become a major committee representing the Mediterranean Special Group), released a Dialogue assessment report in 1996. Referring to the initial positions of the concerned Arab states and the NATO contacts with them, the report indicates that “Mediterranean Countries, in particular

Egypt, Israel and ,to some extent, Tunisia, made it clear to the NATO International Staff that they were not interested in a dialogue for the sake of dialogue only... . Before committing themselves, southern Countries, and this includes Israel, wanted to make sure that the NATO initiative would not be a remake of the somehow disappointing experience of dialogue with the Western European Union (WEU)”⁽³³⁾.

In its assessment report, NATO expresses satisfaction at the development of its Dialogue Initiative following series of bilateral contacts with Dialogue states, particularly in the light of its precontact modest expectations. Below are the Arab states’ positions and their different interests⁽³⁴⁾.

Egypt

Egypt expressed satisfaction at NATO’s decisions concerning Mediterranean Dialogue and hoped that the Dialogue would continue. Nevertheless, Egyptian officials pointed out, at their first meetings with their NATO counterparts, that the Dialogue should be based on practical principles which, in turn, could clear away the suspicions of the Arab public opinion towards NATO. On this basis, Egypt has been interested in NATO’s scientific programs as well as in receiving NATO assistance in demining operations in the Egyptian desert. Besides, the national Dialogue agenda is keen on serving the objectives of Egyptian foreign policy regarding some security fields such as facing terrorism and revealing any Israeli nuclear threat against national security. The Egyptian agenda also seeks to strengthen Egypt’s regional-international role. This endeavor can be clearly seen in Egypt’s increasing military participation in NATO-supervised peacekeeping troops and the International Force (IFOR) operating in Bosnia. Also, in this regard, according to field Marshal Hussein TanTawy, Egyptian Minister of Defense, "the Egyptian participation in peace-keeping in Bosnia stems from its belief in the importance of stability in this part of the world, and also the importance of cooperation between the states of the Mediterranean".⁽³⁵⁾

The Egyptian government views its participation as an international recognition of its military capabilities. This too comes as a reason that motivates Egypt to cooperate with the Mediterranean members of the NATO.

Jordan

Jordan welcomed the initiative and called for its

continuation. A semi official study conducted by US Rand Foundation for the interest of the Italian Foreign Ministry on NATO's Mediterranean Initiative points out that "Questions can be raised about the nature of challenges to Jordan's security and whether NATO can help to address this challenge. Nonetheless, Jordan clearly regards the initiative in highly favorable terms, although what it actually expects from the initiative remains unclear."⁽³⁶⁾

Jordan, like Egypt and Morocco, is a participant in the NATO- led peace troops. Such form of practical cooperation of these countries with NATO might be based on "calculations that they can get a much closer understanding of how the Alliance actually works at the military level, and simultaneously speed up possible formal cooperation with NATO's structures by being involved on the ground rather than sending their officers to NATO courses and seminars."⁽³⁷⁾

Furthermore, the political stands of Jordan at the regional and international levels, as well as its deep relations with Western countries, and its political and strategic role in bringing about regional stability and security are factors that make Jordan's participation in the Initiative necessary.

The Jordanian political leadership has shown special interest and interaction towards NATO. This was reflected in the series of visits paid by King Abdullah II to NATO headquarters. In his last visit on June 11, 2002, the King discussed with then NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson the issue of terrorism. "They also discussed the reinforcement of the political and practical dimensions of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue."⁽³⁸⁾

Also, members of the Jordanian Royal family took part in some NATO activities. For example, Princess Colonel Aisha Al-Hussain, a serving colonel in the Jordanian army and sister of King Abdullah of Jordan, participated in a Mediterranean Dialogue meeting on military cooperation at NATO HQ on 12 September, 2003.

3. Maghreb States

Morocco, Tunisia, and Mauritania were less enthusiastic than Egypt and Jordan.

At first, **Tunisia** expressed doubts about seeing any new dimension that the Initiative could add to the previous European initiatives related to the Southern Mediterranean. At a later stage, however, Tunisian suspicions turned to apparent satisfaction regarding a dialogue with NATO. Tunisia showed a clear interaction

with NATO even at the military level, when a military NATO delegation made a visit to Tunisia.

Morocco

Morocco was the most doubtful Arab state as far as the Initiative is concerned. It took NATO tremendous efforts to remove doubts and mistrust and to secure Morocco's agreement to the Dialogue. Morocco's positive position developed rapidly, and was reinforced by the March 1996 visit of Moroccan Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to NATO Headquarters as well as by Moroccan participation in NATO peace troops in Bosnia and Kosovo. Commenting on his country's position towards NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, Moroccan ambassador to Brussels, an official widely familiar with NATO- Moroccan contacts, says: "Morocco still supports this NATO initiative. This initiative follows the kingdom's policy concerning an area in which the Mediterranean is the central player. In this context, Morocco has fully participated in all political meetings concerning the Mediterranean Dialogue. ... In addition, Morocco has been the initiator of the option to request and receive the status of observer membership to the NATO Alliance.

... Morocco recognizes NATO's efforts in providing a workable dialogue, particularly in the following sectors: information, training, scientific activities, and cooperation in the civil emergency sectors.

Current dialogue is now a way to promote positive relationships and implement a confident climate between the Alliance and the concerned Mediterranean countries. The meeting proved the interest in continuing this dialogue. This, with the cooperation of all parties concerned, could lead to multi-sectorial collaboration."⁽³⁹⁾

Morocco has displayed a practical cooperation with NATO that was broader than that shown by Tunisia. For instance, there have been several visits made by some Alliance marine troops to Morocco in April 2001.

Mauritania

Since the very beginning, Mauritania has been mainly interested in NATO's scientific programs, particularly areas of water resources, environment protection and deforestation. On the other hand, Mauritania, as a leading Mauritanian researcher says, hoped that its participation in the Dialogue would make it a leading voice in the region. "As for Mauritania, its expectations fall within the limits of its integration in the Mediterranean partnership,

and of being considered a true Maghreb country and an open door toward Africa.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ Put in a different way, Mauritania hopes that its participation in the Alliance’s Initiative will reinforce its regional role both at the African and Maghreb levels. Mauritania too, as is the case with Morocco, has developed some forms of military cooperation with NATO such as receiving the visit made by some Alliance marine troops as mentioned previously.

The participation of Mauritania is connected with political motives that have to do with promoting its foreign political role, and benefiting from NATO’s technological and technical capacities in dealing with environmental and water-related issues. It is also connected with its desire to benefit from the military development of NATO so as to reinforce its own military capabilities.

Algeria

Recently, the stable political regime in Algeria has shown protocol and diplomatic signs towards the Israelis. In addition, Europe looks at Algeria as an important element that should be politically supported to make it able to face its internal security challenges. What’s more, Algeria has also shown a policy of diplomatic relations that is consistent with the European views. An Algerian ambassador attributes Algerian acceptance of the Initiative to the international developments following the Cold War as well as to the domestic security challenges and internal political changes.⁽⁴¹⁾

The desire of Algeria to enhance its regional role and compete with the Moroccan role has added to its interest in the Initiative.

Accordingly, the Alliance, acting at a French suggestion, invited Algeria to take part in its Dialogue Initiative in February 2000.

Algeria has shown rapid and growing cooperation with NATO. This is reflected in a number of contacts and activities between both sides. One example is the military training workshop given by NATO’s Mobile Training Team to some Algerian officers. Another example is the visit made by President Bouteflika of Algeria to NATO headquarters for the second time on December 10, 2002. This visit and the areas discussed have been explored earlier in this study. But in this very visit, the Algerian president expressed the interest of Algeria in Mediterranean Dialogue. He also stressed his country’s desire to receive some assistance from NATO to upgrade the Algerian army.⁽⁴²⁾

Although the initial response of the Maghreb states towards the Initiative was less enthusiastic than that shown by the Mashreq states, they showed recently a rapid subsequent interaction especially by Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. The interaction was so tense that it grew to a state of competition to launch more cooperation with NATO.

One of the reasons that we should bear in mind is that the relationship between those countries on the one hand and the European Market, at that time, on the other hand contributed to Maghreb states achieving some tangible results in the fields of technology, economy, commerce, etc. As for the NATO Initiative, in the beginning it was not clear for these states what concrete benefits such initiative could give to them. However, the Initiative moved later to address this very issue.

These countries developed a sort of relations with NATO that evolved into some kind of military visits and limited joint military exercises, a step that no other Dialogue Arab country has taken.

In general, the participant Maghreb states aimed at securing NATO’s support of a partnership between European Mediterranean states and Maghreb countries, particularly in connection to the following principles:

1. Supporting regional Maghreb integration.
2. Contributing to the complementary dimension of Maghreb–European relations or partnership and promoting all moves taken to minimize the differences between Maghreb and Europe.
3. Creating a state of mutual consultation in areas such as navigation safety, armed conflicts, arms control, fighting terrorism, foreign debts, tourism and migration.

It might be appropriate to explore the position of Israel, as a participant country in the Dialogue. Israel enjoys special relations with the West. The supportive stands shown towards Israel by America and Europe have caused Israel to bear no doubts or mistrust *vis-à-vis* NATO. Moreover, Israel had previously, but without success, requested membership of NATO in 1957. The Israeli officials, therefore, responded positively and quickly to NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue.⁽⁴³⁾

According to an Arab politician, the Israeli participation in the Initiative contributes, from a Western view, to “benefiting from the Israeli experience in the region, specially in as far as terrorism combat is concerned. Moreover, such participation will help integrate Israel into the Arab-Middle East system; thus

reducing some of the burdens that Israel imposes on the West.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

Following September 11 attacks, there have been Israeli calls to admit Israel as a NATO member state. In its editorial, the Jerusalem Post demanded that Israel become a NATO member. It pointed out that since the Alliance is basically meant to fight terrorism, Israel should automatically join NATO. Being a neighbor of Turkey (a NATO member) and being geographically close to Europe, Israel, the newspaper says, meets the present geographical demands of membership to NATO.⁽⁴⁵⁾ These Israeli calls reflect the Israeli ambitions to obtain full membership to NATO rather than the mere participation in the Mediterranean Initiative.

Israel presented its own agenda to help develop the Initiative according to its view. A NATO Parliament report describes a lengthy meeting between Israeli officials and experts with a NATO delegation on March 28, 1996. An Israeli agenda, which was not revealed to the public opinion at the time, was placed on the table of discussions. The agenda focused on the following aspects:⁽⁴⁶⁾

1. The developments of international and regional security in the Middle East, including threats posed by terrorist operations of anti-peace groups. (Egypt was also interested in this aspect).

2. Means to avoid the proliferation of WMD and long-range delivery means to the region.

3. How NATO can actively contribute to strengthening regional stability through developing cooperation programs at the military level.

This agenda, as it is apparent, had a tangible effect on shaping the aforementioned broad principles and themes of NATO's Initiative. According to the same report, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia were interested in discussing non-existing details with NATO. Unlike Egypt and Israel, these countries have not had a specific Dialogue agenda yet.⁽⁴⁷⁾

In general terms, the participant Arab states were more recipient to NATO's ideas than being active in determining the broad principles and themes of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. The Egyptian position, however, remains the most developed and active in attempting to affect the Initiative's trends and set up the restrictions required to confront any resulting shortcomings. This can be clearly seen in the important needs and themes that Egypt, through its Deputy Assistant Minister for European Affairs and Security and

Strategic Organizations, insisted the Dialogue should cover. At a Mediterranean Dialogue seminar, held in cooperation with the Mediterranean Special Group, Egyptian Deputy Assistant Minister pointed out that the themes listed below, which reflect Egypt's view regarding the future of the Dialogue and what modifications should be introduced. These themes are to:⁽⁴⁸⁾

- enlarge the Dialogue to more countries, in order to avoid the creation of dividing lines;
- agree on a comprehensive concept of security and on a common concept of coexistence and security, including the political, military, economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects;
- harmonize the philosophy of humanitarian intervention along the UN guidelines;
- make the Mediterranean countries acquainted with the activity of NATO in the economic and scientific fields;
- guarantee more clarity and transparency regarding NATO's new strategic concept, its definition of "risk", especially regarding non-article 5 operations;⁽⁴⁹⁾
- define more clearly NATO's policy towards the proliferation of WMD and terrorism.

The report points out the Egyptian stress on the need to clearly define such loose terms as "risks" and "terrorism," two terms that the West uses when referring to the Arab World and the Arab-Palestinian movements of resistance against the Israeli presence in the Arab and Palestinian territories.

A recent MSG report on the stands of the Dialogue states points out that "The ambassadors of the 6 Dialogue countries in Brussels have been instrumental in achieving trust and creating linkages. After five years of Dialogue, the concerned countries have shown a preference to be treated as individuals rather than as a group. There are marked differences in the level of interest between, for instance, Israel and Mauritania. Some countries want more time and voice in the dialogue, and more access to NATO platforms to discuss cooperation. Hence, while, for practical reasons, many meetings explaining NATO policy will treat the Dialogue countries as a group, there is an approach to dealing with each country individually in order to handle its specific interests and concerns."⁽⁵⁰⁾

But what criteria did NATO follow in selecting the five participant Arab states, and why countries like Syria, Lebanon, and Libya were not considered? To start with,

one cannot miss the fact that all the concerned countries, besides having positive relations with the West, adopt political trends that go in harmony with the West in general. In the second place, these five countries have either signed peace treaties with Israel or at least shown practices that pave the way for the birth of a state of coexistence with Israel or establishing relations with it. To a great extent, these considerations do not currently apply to the three not yet invited Arab countries. As for Algeria, the political regime there has shown political or protocol signs towards the Israelis. In addition to its importance for the security of Europe, Algeria follows a harmonic political relation with the West. Moreover, there is a need to provide the Algerian political regime with substantial support to assist it in confronting the country's internal security challenges. In the light of these factors and variables together, the Alliance, acting at a French suggestion, extended an invitation to Algeria in February 2000. Algeria responded positively to the invitation.

Where do NATO Members Stand Regarding NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue?

The interest, enthusiasm and interaction with which NATO members received the Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue are not similar. Recently, though, their stands have witnessed a positive improvement, especially after September 11.

The Mediterranean NATO members, being in the vicinity of the concerned Arab states particularly those in North Africa, are the most interested and they represent the steering power behind the Initiative. In other words, it is geography that has basically shaped this interest. Northern NATO members, on the other hand, are less concerned and enthusiastic towards the Dialogue. Still, the bottom line is that all NATO members, including America, share a desire to carry on with the Initiative. Some Allies think the Initiative should remain within the framework of a "Dialogue" while some others want it to be transformed into a "Partnership" that would be similar to the Partnership for Peace Program with East Europe and the Scandinavian countries. Such various positions can be attributed to different reasons:

1. Financial considerations: Some NATO members voiced concern over the financial responsibilities which NATO will have to undertake and to sustain the Dialogue, especially that the participant Arab countries face economic difficulties and, hence,

depend largely on NATO for activating the Dialogue and its relevant programs.

2. Various sensitivity to Mediterranean problems or "risks": NATO members do not have the same sensitivity towards the possible threats against the security of NATO Mediterranean members which the problems in the Arab Mediterranean countries might pose such as migration from North Africa and acts of violence by some extreme movements.
3. Various political interests: The US, for example, will not allow the development of the Dialogue to any level that might influence its single role and dominance over the political process in the region, particularly the peace process.

As a matter of fact, while NATO Mediterranean allies (namely Spain, Italy, Greece, France, Portugal, and Turkey) were the most interested in the Dialogue, they too expressed various levels of interest. During the NATO discussions to review the Alliance's Strategic Concept immediately following the end of the Cold War, Spain was the most persistent in calling for as much NATO interest in the Mediterranean as in East and Central Europe. Spain's point of argue was that "Following the end of the Cold War, the general approach of the Spanish Socialist Party and important sectors of the government centered on the idea that the security problems in the Mediterranean were not military and that, therefore, a non-military approach to the Mediterranean was needed. This Spanish initiative implied a substantial change."⁽⁵¹⁾

The Spanish role was particularly active in the 1997 Madrid Summit, which marked a turning point in the Dialogue. But Spain was not the only player. Italy too was a great supportive power that contributed effectively to the development and implementation of the Initiative, particularly at the political level. Even at the scientific level, Italy was strongly there through financing many academic studies and seminars on how the Dialogue could be advanced. Commenting on the setting up of an MCG, Italian Foreign Minister talked about his country's support and the optimal level Italy would wish the Initiative to reach: "the creation of a Mediterranean Co-operation Group is a primary example. This must be considered a good start, but should not be considered an end in itself, rather the beginning of a process that should lead us beyond 'dialogue' to full 'Co-operation.' Such itinerary has only just begun and looks to be a long journey"⁽⁵²⁾.

Though France supported the Mediterranean Dialogue, it first showed cautious enthusiasm. France might possibly have had fears that the Initiative could negatively affect its role, influence, and traditional relations with North African states. Furthermore, the European Union is, from a French point of view, in a more appropriate position to take the lead in the Mediterranean. Above all, Paris has been sensitive to any American role in the region.⁽⁵³⁾

As for North American NATO members, the American position is, no doubt, of a pivotal importance and influence over the present and future status of the Initiative. The American position, which was first marked by cautious acceptance of the Dialogue, has shown an increasingly evident interest in it.

At first, the US, while expressing no objection to the Initiative, cautiously considered the Dialogue to fall under the broad specter of priorities and different interests. The American cautious position could be understood on the basis of the factors below:

1. The United States was worried that NATO's interest in the Dialogue would be at the expense of the American desire to enlarge NATO membership.
2. The US was equally worried that NATO would shift focus from East Europe to the Middle East which receives a special American care.
3. America had doubts that the Initiative was simply a developed European–French role in the Middle East peace process at the expense of its own role.

America, on the other hand, does have national interests in the Mediterranean Dialogue:

1. The Initiative will provide the Americans with an appropriate collective mechanism to deal with issues related to terrorism and the proliferation of WMD across the region. Such mechanism, in turn, creates the opportunity for launching relevant contacts and discussions with NATO at the regional and national levels.
2. The US is interested in developing the military aspects involved in the Dialogue into some sort of joint military exercises compromising NATO, the Arab Dialogue states and Israel whether at dual or collective level.
3. The Israeli interest in the Initiative represents a motivating element for an American support.
4. Most significantly, the stability of NATO southern members, and facing all possible “sources of threat” against their security is directly related to NATO

security and is, therefore, an integral part of American priorities.⁽⁵⁴⁾

In parallel with the US interests above, many of the American fears were removed following some NATO developments. The Alliance concluded the first phase of membership enlargement in such a manner that meets the American views in this regard. At the same time, NATO launched its PfP to contain East European countries. In another development, America had enough time to analyze the Dialogue in terms of its prospects, themes, procedure and role. All these factors together played a decisive role in transforming the American stand to a more positive and interactive form. The change was so drastic that a new department was set up at the US Foreign Ministry for tackling Mediterranean issues.⁽⁵⁵⁾ But the American interest in the Dialogue is an indirect result of the Israeli interest.

Despite its considerable development, the American concern with the Alliance's Initiative is much less than that of NATO Mediterranean members. Yet, the American position is very vital and decisive for the success of the Dialogue in light of the American influence over NATO strategies, priorities, and programs. In addition, this position will largely determine the volume and speed of the development of the Dialogue, and whether it can be transformed from a “dialogue” to a state of “full cooperation.”

In short, over the last years the stands of NATO members towards the Initiative have been developing so positively that the Dialogue is now “perceived as a permanent feature of NATO.”⁽⁵⁶⁾ Later on, however, the second Palestinian Intifada has considerably reduced the momentum of the Dialogue. But the September 11 attacks and the US war on Iraq activated the Initiative and provided it with renewed momentum for it is expected to enhance cooperation in the war against terrorism.

Now that we have displayed the positions of Arab states and NATO members towards the Mediterranean Initiative, there is a need for us to explore the effect of the Iraqi crisis on NATO – Arab relations.

NATO and the Iraqi Crisis

The 2003 crisis in Iraq has placed “NATO at one of its most challenging points in its history.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ The Iraqi crisis, before and during the war, has posed a serious and new challenge as to the nature of NATO's role towards the Middle East and the Mediterranean Initiative. The fact

that "NATO was totally absent in the war,"⁽⁵⁸⁾ and the further fact that its position did not contradict with Arab and international anti-war stands helped the Mediterranean Initiative overcome a serious threat and maintain its existence.

The stand adopted by the US, Britain, and Spain on one hand, as opposed to the stand made by France, Germany, and Belgium on the other hand led NATO to deny an American request that the Alliance extend indirect military support to US troops in the war on Iraq.⁽⁵⁹⁾ The Alliance, thus, was able to evade involvement, whether directly or indirectly, in this American war. This was definitely met with relief; NATO's stand regarding this war did not, at least, contradict the Arab states stands, which were expressed in the concluding statement of an Arab Summit held on March 2, 2003.⁽⁶⁰⁾

- The Arab states emphasize their absolute opposition of any strike against Iraq, or any act that may threaten the security and safety of any Arab state for it shall be viewed as a threat against Arab national security. The Iraqi crisis must, therefore, be settled by peaceful means within the framework of international legitimacy.
- The Arab states call on all other countries to support Arab efforts seeking to avoid war. This can be achieved through the full implementation by Iraq of UN Resolution 1441. (The NATO Prague Summit on November 21, 2002 had already adopted this demand.)
- The Arab states reaffirm that they will refrain from participating in any military act that could endanger the security, safety and unity of Iraq or any other Arab state.

Had NATO taken a military role in this war, there would have been, for the first time ever, a political conflict between NATO and Arab states. The Mediterranean Initiative would, of course, be the first victim of such conflict. But, thanks to the neutral stand NATO assumed, the Initiative has managed to survive.

It is noticed that NATO, in the aftermath of the war on Iraq, has relatively changed its previous positions. This is shown in the backup NATO extended to the military participation of Poland for the sake of supporting "its planned role in the stabilization force in Iraq." The Alliance provided different forms of support such as "force generation, communication, logistics and movement."⁽⁶¹⁾

However, there is still debate within NATO as to what role it should take up in post-war Iraq. The Secretary General of the Alliance, Lord Robertson, expressed this argument as saying, "that while some Allies Strongly favor some kind of NATO role in post-conflict Iraq, none exclude it, and that "the issue of whether and how NATO might contribute to this effort will need to be considered carefully, including the decisions taken by the United Nations."⁽⁶²⁾ But there has been a growing trend for a greater NATO role in Iraq.

The Iraqi official stand, on the other hand, was positive. The Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari voiced, in an interview with CNN network, relief towards a NATO participation in maintaining stabilization in Iraq.⁽⁶³⁾

The post-war era has taken the Mediterranean Initiative to a more active phase. But this activation was initiated by NATO members rather than by participant Arab states. The December 2003 meeting of NATO foreign ministers called for the development of the Mediterranean initiative into a partnership. This implies that participant Arab states assume a recipient, rather than a leading role. But this is how things go when one side is more powerful than the other. This, perhaps, represents one of the weak points in the Initiative.

The Iraqi crisis enhanced Arab future fears regarding the role NATO could play in any future military conflict in the region. The decision of NATO members to adopt a neutral position during the war on Iraq was not dictated by their willingness to remain militarily neutral in any conflict in the Arab region, nor it was the outcome of debates over the geographical boundaries that NATO could operate militarily within. It was, rather, due to the differences among NATO members themselves as to whether or not the war on Iraq was a necessity and how the issue of weapons of mass destruction should be handled. The main difference was about the international reference point that has the authority to tackle crises. Another main difference had to do with rebel political regimes throughout the world. In other words, the differences were related to the conflicting political interests of NATO members rather than whether or not the Alliance should interfere in areas outside its geographical boundaries. Stated differently, the military participation of NATO in any future conflict related to the Arab region depends only on the interests and stands of its members. A decision of such involvement will be made if NATO deems military interference

necessary,(especially that the Alliance has set up a NATO Response Force (NRF) to engage in different regions in the world when necessity demands such interference.) There are, therefore, fears that the same American-Iraqi scenario will be repeated against Syria or Iran or any Arab state. Commenting on the possibility of a US interference in some conflicts in the Arab region, an Arab politician says that “NATO has become a tool for stabilizing the world, including the area. Therefore, it is possible for NATO to interfere in Iraq or other conflict areas. But NATO will only do this within the framework of international legitimacy granted by the UN. The only constrain that can prevent the Alliance from interfering in the region is the stands of the peoples of West Europe.”⁽⁶⁴⁾

It is surprising that Arab officials have made no statements regarding the participation of NATO in Iraq in the post-war era. Arab stands refusing any NATO participation in Iraq might pose pressures on the Alliance, and might push it to maintain neutrality. This, in turn, would not enhance the American role in Iraq. The absence of such Arab stands might be explained by the fact that Arab states and Arab Mediterranean members have tasked the French-German opposition inside the Alliance with such mission.

The Mediterranean Dialogue: Challenges and Obstacles

An Arab diplomat indicated that NATO deals with various issues from a long-term perspective and strategic planning. NATO leaders know exactly what they want. Therefore, such initiatives represent the tool that enables them to attain their goals.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Therefore, Some politicians, studies and academics are reserved about the Initiative on the basis that it aims at keeping the Mediterranean “unhealthy issues” home and preventing them from moving into Europe. Some argue that NATO’s European members do not really intend to construct a partnership, but rather protect themselves from their Arab neighbors.

For NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue to be more productive and effective, some challenges and obstacles have to be overcome. Such challenges relate either to NATO’s history and political structure, the themes of the Initiative, or the situations in the Arab World. This section attempts to explore these challenges and how they can affect the Initiative’s future and success.

NATO-Arab relations are characterized by a sense of misunderstanding, and misperceptions towards NATO. Such a state of unreliability can be attributed to the role that NATO played during the Cold War as an institution that protects the West. In addition, the Alliance was considered as a body dominated by America, i.e. as a tool representing the Western bias towards the Arab–Israeli conflict, especially in the light of some Arab Muslim claims that the West has been looking for a new enemy following the end of the Cold War. Therefore, there has been an urgent need for measures to build mutual confidence. In this context, the Dialogue has included aspects of practical cooperation and called for increasing mutual transparency particularly at terrorism and military level. Nevertheless, it has been noticed such areas of cooperation, are more relevant to NATO’s interests and priorities than to the Arabs’. Consider, for instance, the issues of hard security, peacekeeping operations, the role of information in removing Arab misperceptions, the proliferation of WMD (supposing this issue will not be imposed on Israel), and international terrorism (though some Arab states suffer from terrorism, there are differences about its nature, reasons, resources, and concept⁽⁶⁶⁾ as to whether the case of Palestinian struggle should be dealt with as terrorism or legitimate struggle). In other words, one key to promoting the Dialogue in the Arab World and to overcoming the issue of mistrust is to lay emphasis on the dimension of development.

In a parallel direction, NATO’s relation with the Arab public opinion is still limited although it exists through information activities that address practical cooperation aspects so as to avoid the sensitivity of Arab regimes. Besides, NATO’s Initiative is so far isolated from the active public political powers in the Arab World particularly the opposition. Such isolation feeds the doubts towards NATO’s Initiative and objectives and allows the rejection of the Arab public opinion of this scheme to continue.

The lack of a common “Mediterranean security identity” poses another challenge. The Israeli participation has given the Mediterranean entity a geographical feature rather than a common cultural or security dimension. The Arab states share a common Arab-Islamic, rather than Mediterranean identity as well as a common strategic security agenda. The Israeli participation, as perceived by some Arabs, is a strategic security threat in itself, particularly in the light of an instable peace process. Thus, the Mediterranean Dialogue

faces an obstacle when it comes to working out a common security framework that includes NATO, the Arabs and Israel.

Some have voiced concern that in the future NATO may turn into the basic or genuine peace-keeping tool in the region, which will reinforce the dominance of the Initiative's military dimension over cooperation ties in the region. In other words, NATO may grow so dominant as to play the policeman in the region as is the case in the Balkan states.

Some have expressed reservation that NATO's Mediterranean activity may become one component of a mechanism that is envisaged to reinforce the American role in the region. This reservation is consolidated by the fact that NATO's agenda, as well as its political and military tasks, are primarily shaped by the US. Prince El-Hassan bin Talal of Jordan expressed, in one of his recent addresses, his fears that NATO might become a tool to assert US dominance at the international level. "General Jones, NATO's supreme commander, explained that the alliance is preparing to evolve a presence far beyond Afghanistan and the Middle East. Securitising China, if that is the ultimate objective, I am not attributing these words to him but to the website of the Project of the New American Century, then this new US strategic center of influence is an important part of NATO's metamorphosis into a global military player. It is strange to be saying this in 2003." Should these fears realize, the Initiative would be a means to enhance the American dominance over the region, rather than a means of political or civilized cooperation. It is apparent, therefore, that there is a need on the European part to develop their own decision-making processes. "This new initiative requires a renewed partnership between the United States and Europe. Enabling Europe to play a greater political, financial and security role in the Mediterranean NATO Command system is restructured on the principle of "variable geometric" and by a balanced distribution of command posts".⁽⁶⁷⁾

The dominance of the American role at NATO imposes this role as a main variable in structuring NATO policies with Mediterranean states. Add to this the Israeli dimension, which enjoys special strategic relations with the West. It follows that the position which the concerned Arab states assume in NATO's Mediterranean policies will be determined by the framework whose most dimensions are structured in light of the American-Israeli relations. If the Dialogue was free of the Israeli side, the

Arabs, in cooperation with NATO Mediterranean members, might be more effective. But if it were not for Israel, the Initiative would not have probably existed in the first place!

The principle of NATO operations outside the territory of the Alliance also represents another challenge. At the 1999 Washington Summit of NATO leaders, the Alliance officially announced the expansion of the scope of its military and security role as to include areas outside the political borders of its members⁽⁶⁸⁾. It further set up a NATO Response Force at the 2002 Prague Summit and following the June 2003 meeting of its ministers of defense. In other words, NATO decided that it would mandate itself by itself to take action, rather than receiving a UN mandate. As Abu-Odeh said, the US and the West are now using NATO as a tool for stabilizing the world.

As a matter of fact, the principle of "action beyond NATO borders" gives the Alliance the right to interfere in other countries' affairs and to use power against them under the umbrella of peace-keeping, crisis-management, evacuating NATO citizens, and removing WMD. It also gives NATO the right to provide logistic backup to help a NATO members face an external threat. Such support has, in fact, been extended to Turkey during the Iraqi crisis. History reveals many similar interventions that were made under noble goals to achieve undeclared interests. One should note that the prospects of NATO intervention are intensified by its decision to enlarge eastwards, especially that East Europe represents a relatively large size of manpower.⁽⁶⁹⁾ This decision was soon implemented in Kosovo, where the Alliance interfered militarily without a UN mandate in this regard. The expansion policy was even preceded by a practical military interference in Kosovo. The Alliance also sent peace-keeping troops to Afghanistan and deployed Polish peace troops in Iraq. In addition, the Alliance is currently discussing a future role in Iraq.

Although the Arab countries welcomed NATO's intervention in Kosovo, it aroused fears that this step might become a precedent for any future attempts to solve international disputes. Moreover, "the Arabs, worried that they might be the coming victim sooner or later, do not trust the reliability of an international system dominated by one force that adopts a selective policy of double standards. They have the impression that the American charges and files are fabricated and ready to exploit as an excuse for military intervention"⁽⁷⁰⁾ as is the

case with Iraq, Sudan, and Syria. Such issue causes another problem. There are common political, security, social, and economic ties connecting Arab members and non-members of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue. This means that the concerned countries will act as a connecting link between NATO and non-participant Arab countries and will, consequently, have negative or positive effects on NATO's policies towards non-participant countries. For example, any military intervention by NATO in Syria or Sudan to support the prosecuted minority would make the Arab Dialogue states, adopt positions that would freeze or even destroy NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue.

The fact that NATO's Initiative is based on a relationship between two unequal powers represents another challenge. The Dialogue is an initiative made by the powerful and offered to the less powerful or weak states. From the perspective of the policies of international interests, such offer will first meet the priorities of the powerful, i.e. NATO, and then fulfill those of the less powerful, i.e. the concerned Mediterranean countries. In other words, the Initiative addresses issues of NATO interest such as the proliferation of WMD and preventing the possible Mediterranean risks, as perceived by NATO, from spilling over Europe without even attempting to contain some of these risks. The concerned Mediterranean countries might get the feeling that the Dialogue serves NATO priorities, or at least the problems NATO is worried about, rather than their own areas of interest such as de-mining and the transfer of technology, especially at the military level. In this context, Israel, one should remember, is the only non-NATO Mediterranean country that obtains such technology. The director of a specialized European research center says that "since NATO retains its image of a collective defense alliance against an unnamed common enemy, when south Mediterranean public opinion sees itself in the shoes of the West's enemy, it is only natural it should feel that NATO is somehow targeting it. This is yet another reason why NATO should make it clear that whatever it does towards the Mediterranean it does so in the name of cooperative, or even shared security, and not because it wishes to naturalize what it sees as a source of looming dangers."⁽⁷¹⁾

In this respect, some Arab literature sees that NATO will change into a super military power that will dominate regional and international affairs in the 21st century.⁽⁷²⁾

Other Arab scholars point out that, in order to face this unequal dominance, the Arabs have three options⁽⁷³⁾:

1. Submissiveness: This means the absolute acceptance by Arabs of the Atlantic political, economic, security and cultural dominance.
2. Adaptation: This means a certain Arab response of various shapes to NATO's policies and stands.
3. Inflexibility: This means the development of collective institutional and academic strategies that are based on the activation of the Arab League and the revival of Arab Joint Defense Treaty signed in 1950 For the purpose of the setting up of an Arab force for quick interference. In other words, inflexibility means the transformation of the Arab League into a regional military-political institution that is concerned with security, defense and other issues. This would enable the Arabs to contain the Atlantic dominance over the Arab World. It would also help them give up the necessity of NATO peace-keeping troops. Finally, this would make them a relatively equal partner in any NATO dialogue without being subject to NATO's interests and influence.

Another obstacle facing the Dialogue is that the Initiative's long term goal is not well-defined:" the goals of the Initiative remain ill-defined. It is not clear whether the main purpose of it is simply to conduct a dialogue or partnership with the countries of the Southern Mediterranean or whether the Initiative is also part of the broader effort to establish defense cooperation with these countries. This lack of clarity, to a large extent, reflects the limited consensus within NATO about what the Initiative is really supposed to do."⁽⁷⁴⁾

NATO needs to focus primarily on working out mechanisms to increase transparency and remove, or at least minimize, mutual doubts and misunderstanding. On the other hand, however, "Western policies with regard to political reform, human rights, and civil – military relations may severely constrain the scope for cooperation and may make dialogue beyond these issues difficult."⁽⁷⁵⁾

The ability of NATO and the Mediterranean to work out a common security agenda stands out as another challenge, particularly that the security threats against the Mediterranean states are different from those against NATO. While the former suffer from purely internal threats, the latter suffers from external problems such as migration, international terrorism security instability, and

ethnic conflicts.

A possible challenge has to do with the democratic differences between NATO members and the Arab Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, the differences at the level of decision-making policies might affect the

future of the Initiative as well. Though it is still early to consider this as a challenge, NATO's Initiative will definitely call for better democratic situations in the Arab World so as to continue.

NOTES

- (1) Javier Solana. 1997. "NATO and the Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Mediterranean Affairs, Inc., Washington, 11.
- (2) Madrid Summit Declaration. 1997. NATO office of Information and Press, 8 – 9 V11.
- (3) The Partnership for Peace (PfP) Initiative aims at developing domains of cooperation and military ties amongst the 30 member countries (later ten of them became full members of NATO). It also seeks to enhance security stability throughout East and West Europe. Furthermore, the program is meant to promote abilities and capabilities that can maintain peace in Europe through joint planning, training and military exercises. By so doing, PfP will help increase the interoperability of the Partner country's military forces with those of NATO. The program also seeks to establish and develop transparency at the level of national defense planning and budgeting. The initiative consists of 24 cooperation areas, including Air Defense Related Matters, Civil Emergency Planning (including disasters), Defense Policy and Strategy, Military Infrastructure, Command and Control (including communication and information systems), etc. For further details, see *The NATO Handbook*, NATO Office of Information and Press, 50th Anniversary Edition, 1998-1999, p92-96.
- (4) **Membership of NATO:**
Membership is the highest form of alliance in NATO. It includes a full military and security of cooperation between Members. Any military attack against any Member state compels all other Members to defend the exposed Member. NATO has 26 members now that all come from North America and Europe.

Partnership:

Partnership is a less degree of cooperation than Alliance, and a higher form than Dialogue. NATO

uses this term mainly to refer to the partnership for peace (PfP) PFP is chiefly aimed at defense cooperation and is an operational side of the partnership framework, designed to reinforce stability and reduce the risk of conflict.

All the members of this partnership come from European and Scandinavian states.

Dialogue:

This is the lowest form of cooperation with NATO. It concerns the Mediterranean states and is limited, as far as military cooperation is concerned, to narrow aspects such as training, fighting terrorism. Dialogue includes a bilateral and multilateral component.

- (5) Madrid Summit Declaration, 1997. Op. cit.
- (6) The Secretary General Lord Robertson briefed the President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, at NATO Head quarters in Brussels on 10 December 2002. NATO Press Release. 11 December on President of Algeria Visits NATO.
(Lord Robertson resigned his position as NATO Secretary General in December 2003. A new Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, was appointed in January 2004.)
- (7) Final communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, On 4 December 2003. NATO Press Releases (2003) 152.
- (8) For further details, see the following official NATO sources:
-Madrid Summit Declaration, 1997, Op. cit.
-NATO Handbook, op. cit, pp105-107.
-The Alliance's Strategic Concept , Approved by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C, 23 - 24 April 1999, NATO Office of Information and Press.
-Javier Solana, "NATO and the Mediterranean" *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Op.cit.
- (9) In this context, the Madrid Summit points out that the dialogue is meant to reinforce other international efforts with Mediterranean partners such as those

- undertaken by the Barcelona process, the Middle East peace process, the WEU and the ASCE, without either duplicating such efforts or intending to create a division of labor.
- (10) See for example the Madrid Summit Declaration, 1997, Op. cit. and the NATO Handbook, Op.cit.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) For more information about this program see the following:
The NATO Science Program, NATO Scientific and Environmental Affairs Division, NATO, www.nato.int/science. See also New Science Program Initiative.
- (13) You can refer to the article written by NATO Secretary General, at that time, Javier Solana entitled: NATO and the Mediterranean, Op. cit , pp. 3-4. See also The Alliance's Strategic Concept, Op.cit.
- (14) According to the Commander of the concerned NATO marine force, who mentioned that the visit related to the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, ... and it also seeks to lay mutual trust as well as to eradicate the premature views that some of these countries hold towards NATO. Ad-Dustour, Jordanian National Newspaper, 15/4/2001. (in Arabic)
- (15) Point de Press by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, <http://nato.int/docu/speech/2002/>, 10 December 2002.
- (16) Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Keynote Address to the NATO and the Greater Middle East Conference, Prague, 17-19 October, 2003.
- (17) For more details on MCG see NATO Handbook, Op. cit., p 109.
- (18) NATO Parliament is an independent body not subject to the authority of NATO. The Parliament, which acts as the link between NATO and national Parliaments of member states, consists of representatives nominated by the national Parliaments of NATO members.
- (19) For further details see Visit to Cairo 7-9 December, Mediterranean Special Group, North Atlantic Assembly, NATO Parliamentarians, Secretariat Report, Published in February 1999.
- (20) Maurizio Coccia (ed), The 50 years of NATO Seen from the Mediterranean Region, under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Defense, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NATO Office of Information and Press. Emilio Tomaselli, Art Director, 2000. pp 138-140.
- Javier Solana, "the New NATO and the Mediterranean", in Ibid pp.12-17. Also, Pedro Moya. NATO's Role in the Mediterranean, Mediterranean Special Group, North Atlantic Assembly, 1997 Reports, International Secretariat, October 1997.
- (21) The Barcelona declaration stated its objective "to establish a comprehensive Euro-Mediterranean partnership in order to turn the Mediterranean into a common area of peace, stability and prosperity through the reinforcement of political dialogue and security, an economic and financial partnership", SCADPlus: Barcelona Declaration and Euro-Mediterranean partnership, European Union, <http://europe.eu.int/scadplus/>
- (22) NATO-EU: A strategic partnership, NATO Issues, 30 Jul 2004, www.nato.int/nato-eu/index.html
- (23) The following sources may prove useful in this regard:
F. Stephen Larraee, Jerrold Green, Ian O.Lesser, Michele Zanini, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas, RAND, Santa Monica, prepared for the Italian Ministry of Defense, 1998.
- (24) Ibid, p3-6.
- (25) Ibid, p4.
- The study also cites some important figures in this respect:
"Developments in the south-eastern Mediterranean can also directly affect the stability and well-being of European members of the Alliance through disruption of energy imports and trade. " much of Europe's energy supplies are imported from the region: 65% of its oil and natural gas imports pass through the Mediterranean on approximately 3000 ships daily; 30 per cent of Italy's oil is imported from Libya and 32 per cent of its natural gas from Algeria; France, Germany, Greece, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom all import oil from Libya, while Algerian natural gas is exported to Belgium, France, Portugal and Spain; 74% Spain's natural gas needs, 50 per cent of Italy's and 29 per cent of France's were imported from the Maghreb states in 1996. Trade in the other

- direction amounted to US \$ 6 billion in the European exports to Algeria in 1996, or 67 per cent of its imports; with 69 per cent of Tunisia's imports, 66 percent of Libya's and 57 percent of Morocco's also coming from Europe.", Ibid p.5
- (26) Ibid, p5.
- (27) The Alliance's Strategic Concept, April 1999, Op. cit, p 7
- (28) Lamberto DINI "Intervention of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs", in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit. pp138-149
- (29) These were the words of Joseph Kruzal, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs speaking at the Naples Headquarters of Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTN) on 27 February 1995. quoted in Gareth M. Winrow "A Threat from the South? NATO and the Mediterranean" Mediterranean Politics, Vol.1, No.1 (Summer 1996), Frank Cass, London, p43.
- (30) Maurizio Cremasco, "Fifth years of NATO in the Mediterranean: A Historical Review", in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit. p67.
- (31) Ahmad Mahmoud Abdel Haleem, NATO Strategy in the Middle East, Center for Political Research and Studies, University of Cairo, Political Studies Series, July 1989, p.7.(in Arabic)
- (32) Adnan abu-Odeh, Former Advisor to King Hussein and King Abdullah II, Personal Interview, Amman, Jan. 1,2004.
- (33) Pedro Moya Co-operation for Security in the Mediterranean: NATO and EU Contributions, 1996 Reports, NAA, Civilian Affairs Committee/ Sub-Committee on the Mediterranean Basin, International Secretariat, November 1996, Op.cit, AN 83, 1996. p2
- (34) The positions of the five Arab participant countries are analyzed based on information taken from report of Pedro Moya Ropportur of Sub-Committee on the Mediterranean Bas in North Atlantic Assembly, Op.cit. and some studies conducted either as we will see by officials from these countries or by interested foreign researchers.
- (35) Al-Ahram Weekly , Egyptian Newspaper, 12 October 1995
- (36) For a January 1997 discussion of Jordan's perspective on the NATO dialogue, see "Security and Cooperation: Jordan's Position," available from the Jordanian Embassy to Belgium/ NATO unpublished, quoted in F. Stephen Larrabee, Op.cit, pp 66-67.
- (37) Pedro Moya, AN83, 1996, Op.cit, p 4
- (38) Visit of King Abdullah II of Jordan, www.nato.int/docu/update/2002/06-june
- (39) Rachad Bouhlal, Ambassador of Morocco to Brussels, "Morocco and The 50 Years of NATO Seen from the Mediterranean Region" in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit, pp. 112-113
- (40) Sidi Brahim Ould Mohanedm "NATO: Half a Century in the Mediterranean. A Mauritanian View". in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit, p. 111.
- (41) An Algerian Ambassador, Personal Interview, Amman, Jan. 3,2004.
- (42) Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Point de Press .Op .cit.
- (43) Israel is the first of the seven participants in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue to have signed a security agreement with NATO. It was signed on 24 April at NATO HQ, Brussels.
- This security agreement provides the framework for the protection of classified information, as defined by all member countries, and is signed by countries that wish to engage in cooperation with NATO.
- (44) Adnan abu-Odeh, Former Advisor to King Hussein and King Abdullah II, Personal Interview, Amman, Jan.1, 2003.
- (45) "Israel should Join NATO", Jerusalem Post, 24/11/2002. Jerusalem.
- (46) Pedro Moya, Co-operation for Security in the Mediterranean, NATO and EU Contributions, 1996 Reports, NAA, Civilian Affairs Committee/ Sub-Committee on the Mediterranean Basin, International Secretariat, November 1996, Op.cit, pp33.
- (47) Ibid, p5.
- (48) Visit to Cairo, Op.cit, p6-7.
- (49) Article 5 stipulates that NATO may use force, including armed military force, to meet any aggression against any of its members.
- (50) Meeting at NATO Headquarter, Mediterranean Special Group, Meeting Report, 17 Sep. 1999, p 3.
- (51) Antonio Marquina, "NATO's Role in the Mediterranean and Spanish Expectations" in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit, pp. 124 – 125.
- (52) Ibid 138.
- (53) F. Stephen Larrabee, Op.cit, p 50.
- (54) Refer to what Joseph Kruzal says in this context. Footnote no 29.

- (55) Meeting at NATO Headquarter, Op.cit, p 3.
- (56) Ibid, p 3.
- (57) The Iraqi Crisis Its impact on the Alliance, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Political Committee, Annual Session 2003 ,145 DSC 03E,2003, Item 82.
- (58) Ibid, p 3.
- (59) The American demands of the Alliance can be summarized as follows:
"Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld confirmed that the U.S. asked NATO to consider providing support that would include overhead radar converge from AWACS surveillance planes and mobile Patriot anti-missile batteries to protect Turkey, which shares a border with Iraq. U.S. has asked the NATO alliance to lend military and logistical support to a U.S. operation against Iraq, assistance that could speed the flow of warriors and weapons to the Persian Gulf battle theater, officials said Wednesday". Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News, Jan 16, 2003, Washington.
- (60) Final communiqué, 15th Arab Summit, Sharm Al Sheik, March 2003.
- (61) "NATO approves support for Poland in Iraq", NATO Council, NATO, 3 June 2003.
- (62) Ibid.
- (63) Hoshyar Zebari, Interview with the CNN, published in Ad-Dustour Jordanian Newspaper, Dec.5, 2003.
- (64) Adnan abu-Odeh, Personal Interview, Amman, Jan.1, 2004.
- (65) An Algerian Ambassador, Personal Interview, Amman, Jan 3,2004.
- (66) For the differences between NATO and Egypt about the concept of terrorism, see NAA, Op.cit, We should also note these differences deepened after the September 11 attacks when Egypt and the Arab-Islamic World objected to referring to the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation as acts of terrorism.
- (67) Loric Tribot Spiere "The 50 Years of NATO Seen the Mediterranean Region. A French View" in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit, p85.
- (68) See Article 48 of The Alliance's Strategic Concept, Washington, 1999.
- (69) Hussein Ma'loum. 1997. "NATO's Map of Enlargement and the Middle East" the file of "New NATO and the Future of International Security" Al Siyassa Al Dawliya, Al Ahram Foundation, Cairo Issue No. 127-129, p. 94.(in Arabic)
- (70) A seminar on "The Issue of Kosovo and the Development of NATO's Role in the Post Cold War Era." The seminar, attended by a group of Arab researchers, was organized by Al Mustaqbal Al Arabi, Beirut, Issue No. 245, July, 1999, p. 109.(in Arabic)
- (71) Alvaro de Vasconcelos, "NATO in the Mediterranean a view from Portugal" in Maurizio Coccia (ed), Op.cit, P 115.
- (72) See for example: Ramzi Habib Al Sayyed, 1995. "NATO's New Strategy", Defense Magazine, Issue No. 11, Cairo (in Arabic)
- (73) Nizar Ismael Al Hayali. 2003. The Role of the Alliance Following the End of the Cold War, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, p 151-155.(in Arabic)
- (74) F. Stephen Larraee, Op.cit, p xiii.
- (75) Ibid, P 20.

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