

When NATO launched its Mediterranean Initiative in late 1994, challenges and opportunities to NATO's south were hardly at the center of Alliance debates. Questions of enlargement and engagement in the east absorbed an overwhelming amount of political energy. In security terms, the Alliance members had a growing sense—underlined by instability in the Balkans and Algeria—that new challenges were emerging outside the center of Europe, and that they would need to grapple with these. But issues related to the Mediterranean remained essentially at the margins of European security and NATO concerns, much as they had throughout the Cold War.

Today, the situation in Europe, around the Mediterranean, and not least within the Alliance itself, is substantially changed. Central and eastern Europe have evolved toward a more stable future, facilitated by decisions on NATO enlargement. Concerns about instability in the south, especially in southeastern Europe, and the future of relations across the Mediterranean have become part of mainstream security discussions on both sides of the Atlantic. Interest in Mediterranean affairs is no longer limited to southern Europe and a few specialists elsewhere. Regardless of how extensive or restricted the model for NATO's future, events on Europe's doorstep will have a marked effect on the security of Europe as a whole. As the final communiqué of NATO's April 1999 Washington Summit emphasized, "security in the whole of Europe is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean."¹ In the future, NATO will of

¹NATO Press Communiqué NAC-S(99)64, p. 11.

necessity be more, rather than less, engaged in dialogue and cooperation with nonmember states in North Africa and the Middle East. Moreover as the Alliance evolves and prepares itself for new tasks—all far more likely to be performed on the periphery rather than in the center of Europe—the need for common understanding and cooperation along north-south lines will grow.

As a result, interest in and scrutiny of the Mediterranean Initiative have deepened. The experience of the past few years is being actively discussed, both in NATO and among the Dialogue states. Long-standing issues, including the state of the Middle East peace process, are in flux and will affect the outlook for the Initiative. The experience of Initiative activities points to certain weaknesses as well as some promising areas for development. Overall, two realities stand out: (1) the Initiative is becoming more important in light of the growing prominence of Mediterranean security and changes in Alliance strategy; and (2) Initiative activities now need to evolve, where possible, from dialogue to more substantive cooperation in areas where NATO has a comparative advantage. The following analysis explores both observations in detail.

To the extent that this report was envisioned as a follow-up to the RAND analysis of the Initiative prepared in 1997, we have tried not to go over the same ground. Rather, we have chosen to emphasize what has changed, what has been learned over the past year, and what opportunities now exist for refining and extending the Initiative consistent with Alliance aims. Chapter Two examines the evolving security environment—the context for the Initiative. Chapter Three explores NATO's own strategic transformation and its implications for the Mediterranean. Chapter Four discusses evolving views and perspectives of the Dialogue countries. Chapter Five assesses the status of other relevant Mediterranean initiatives. Finally, Chapter Six discusses the future of the NATO Mediterranean Initiative, providing a longer-term vision together with overall and specific recommendations.