
THE FUTURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Despite significant political impediments and a continuing degree of ambivalence on the part of participants, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative has served some very useful purposes. First, it has been a key vehicle for information-sharing and dialogue with Mediterranean partners on the nature of the Alliance. This communication is especially important at a time when NATO is changing in ways that directly affect the Mediterranean security environment. The task of dispelling misperceptions regarding the Alliance is essential, and this information dimension—including the task of understanding strategic perceptions in the south—should remain a priority as the Initiative evolves. The establishment of Contact Point Embassies can make a special contribution in this regard. Second, the Dialogue provides a framework for confidence-building that can be given additional substance, including a true multilateral form, as political circumstances permit. Third, the Dialogue has opened the possibility of moving from discussion to practical cooperation in areas of comparative advantage for the Alliance, and with interested partners. Finally—and perhaps most important—the Initiative, including the establishment of the MCG, has encouraged Alliance members themselves to focus on Mediterranean security issues. As our analysis suggests, the question of NATO's strategy toward the south is acquiring greater importance, and is reflected in the new Strategic Concept and post-Kosovo debates about the future of the Alliance.

A LONGER-TERM VISION

The core objective of political dialogue retains its importance, but the Initiative is now at a stage where further development is required

if Alliance and Dialogue countries are to remain actively engaged. Defining a longer-term vision for the Initiative is essential. In our view, this vision should have the following components:

- *Make the Initiative an integral part of NATO's own strategy toward the south.* The new Strategic Concept places greater emphasis on new functional missions oriented toward the defense of common interests, as well as the defense of member territory. These new missions will be most relevant and most likely to be performed on Europe's southern periphery. The Initiative can play an integral part in assuring that NATO can perform these missions in a cooperative climate. This approach can parallel in some (although not all) ways the role of PFP and the EAPC in NATO strategy toward Europe and Eurasia.
- *Acknowledge the key role of the EU in the longer-term evolution of relations around the Mediterranean.* Regardless of shortcomings, EU policies toward the Mediterranean will play a vital role in shaping the security environment—broadly defined—in a region where social and economic challenges predominate. A specific NATO-EU mechanism for coordination on Mediterranean issues may not be practical. The larger problem concerns the absence of formal mechanisms for NATO-EU coordination generally. A more active role for the EU in foreign and security policy will require (and probably encourage) closer coordination between the two institutions. It is essential that Mediterranean policy be made part of this larger NATO-EU agenda.
- *Focus on areas of comparative advantage for the Alliance.* The Initiative can usefully address “soft” security issues, i.e., nonmilitary risks. But these should not be confused with the broad-gauge social and economic questions such as migration, trade, and unemployment that are more properly handled by the EU. As the Initiative evolves, however, it can and should begin to foster practical cooperation in areas where the Alliance has a comparative advantage, from crisis management to civil emergency planning and defense. Military cooperation, including training and joint exercises where appropriate, will offer tangible benefits. It will help the Alliance to operate effectively in the south and contribute to regional security and confidence-building. Not least, it will also give key Alliance members,

including the United States, a greater stake in the future of the Initiative.

- *Base future activities on a “cooperative security” model for the Mediterranean.* After decades of neglect, the Mediterranean is becoming more central to strategic debates and defense planning. It will serve the interests of NATO and its Dialogue partners to ensure that the Mediterranean is seen as more than simply Europe’s “near abroad” or a logistical way-point to interests elsewhere—however attractive these models may be to Western strategists. As our analysis suggests, most of the new risks in the Mediterranean are transregional and the stakes in addressing them are shared. A north-south dialogue about security should pave the way for more active cooperation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- *Reinforce the nongovernmental dimension.* Resources devoted to information activities and outreach are well spent in an area where NATO is often misperceived, especially as the Alliance itself continues to change. Given the political climate in the Middle East, unofficial or “second track” meetings make a special contribution to a dialogue that can be difficult to conduct on a multilateral basis at the official level. Consideration should be given to establishing a “Mediterranean defense studies” network, bringing together experts from security institutes in Dialogue countries and on both sides of the Atlantic. The effect of this would be to give a transatlantic (and NATO focused) dimension to the existing and very useful EuroMeSCo network.
- *Reinforce the Dialogue by making it more region-specific.* General discussion about NATO and its role remains important. But Dialogue-country interests and NATO’s own growing attention to the Mediterranean point to the need for a more region-specific agenda. This recognition implies a focus on key issues where concern is shared—even if perspectives may differ sharply: terrorism, energy security, refugee flows (rather than the more general issue of economic migration), civil emergency planning, and the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles. A more region-specific approach would be encouraged by giving

Dialogue countries a larger role in development of the MCG work plan.

- *Provide for “variable geometry” in dialogue and cooperation.* As the Initiative continues to evolve there will be differences in interest and enthusiasm among the Dialogue countries. This disparity is already evident. Countries with an interest in more active engagement should be able to pursue the Initiative within a more flexible framework. In short, cooperation should be developed on a case-by-case basis. Some countries such as Egypt and Israel may be ready for limited military cooperation, but others may not—and some may never be. Obviously, the desire to foster multilateral approaches will place limits on this differentiation, but the Initiative should not be a lowest common denominator for cooperation.
- *Move toward practical, defense-related activities.* As noted, this is a leading opportunity for reinvigorating the Initiative with Dialogue countries as well as key Alliance members. The idea of a PFP for the Mediterranean is probably premature, and in any case some of the objectives of PFP in Europe do not apply in the Mediterranean. NATO membership is not on the agenda in the south. But PFP-like cooperative activities concerning defense can contribute to strengthening the Initiative.

Interested Dialogue partners could participate directly in training and exercise programs for peace support. This involvement would build on the experience of Egyptian, Jordanian, and Moroccan participation in IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia. In this context, the military activities conducted by ACE and ACLANT with Dialogue countries could be enhanced to include exercises with interested participants.¹ Air and maritime search and rescue would be a good starting point, together with noncombatant evacuation and refugee-control operations. Ultimately, it may be useful to establish more formal arrangements for the participation of Dialogue countries in regional peace support operations through Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs).

¹In 1998, Allied Command Europe (ACE) and Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT) together offered 34 military activities to Dialogue countries as observers. See Bin, p.27.

In this same vein, NATO should explore ways of applying its military expertise to the security problems of Dialogue countries in ways that are visible to public opinion. NATO could coordinate the mine-clearing efforts of member countries in Egypt as an activity undertaken within—or in the spirit of—the Mediterranean Initiative.²

- *Give the Initiative a parliamentary dimension.* As noted in this analysis and elsewhere, NATO's problem of public acceptance in the south extends, in many cases, to political elites. In several Dialogue countries, parliaments now play a serious and legitimate political role. The debate on foreign and security policy, including relations with NATO, is also becoming more active. The Initiative can engage these elites effectively by embracing the well-established Mediterranean Dialogue organized by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NPA).³ Making this NPA activity a formal part of the Initiative would also contribute to rationalizing the many ongoing fora and would provide a coordinated framework for discussion of NATO-related issues in the south.
- *Consider expanding the Dialogue to include Algeria.* Over time, pressures will build to include additional southern Mediterranean states in the Dialogue. For the moment, the only practical candidate is Algeria. Arguments can be made on both sides of this question. On the negative side, Algeria is a difficult case as a result of the continuing instability, as well as sensitivities regarding policy toward Algiers and the behavior of the regime. There is some risk that Algiers will see participation in the Dialogue as a vehicle for engaging others in its internal security problems (although the demonstrated unwillingness of the Algerian leadership to allow outside actors any role in the crisis makes this unlikely). On the positive side, the situation in Algiers

²Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom have already agreed to collaborate in mine-clearing operations by sending their experts and equipment, as well as by training Egyptian personnel. "Italy: Italy-Egypt Sign Military Accord; Andreatta, Tantawi Cited," *La Stampa* (Turin), March 24, 1998, p.10, FBIS-WEU-98-083.

³Parliamentarians from Dialogue countries regularly attend NPA sessions, and special Dialogue meetings have been held on Mediterranean affairs, the most recent in Cairo in December 1998. See Simon Lunn, "NATO's Parliamentary Arm Helps Further the Aims of the Alliance," *NATO Review*, Winter 1998.

is less stark than a few years ago. Participation in a dialogue with NATO and other regional states is unlikely to harm the political situation, and it might possibly help by fostering transparency. NATO has already established some contacts with Algeria, most notably through Algerian participation at an ACLANT conference in the fall of 1998, and high-level visits by civilian and military officials of key member states.⁴

Above all, Algeria is an important regional actor that has played an active international role in the past and could well do so again. The country is already a member of other Mediterranean cooperation initiatives. Some central issues for the future of the Dialogue, including energy security and proliferation, are difficult to address without Algeria. There should be strong interest on the Algerian side, and many MCG and Dialogue states are open to Algeria's inclusion. On balance, we believe Algerian participation could contribute to the longer-term aims of the Initiative.

- *Increase resources and make exceptions to the self-funding principle where necessary.* Enlargement, Balkan operations, and an active PFP program place substantial pressures on NATO budgets. But given the growing, functional focus on NATO missions oriented toward the south, additional resources for the Initiative would pay dividends in helping to shape the Mediterranean security environment. In particular, the MCG should consider establishing guidelines to determine when and how costs for Dialogue-country participation in Initiative activities can be covered by NATO. Exceptions to the self-funding principle will be necessary if the Alliance is serious about a more active program of Mediterranean cooperation.
- *Where possible, embrace existing bilateral (and multilateral) defense exercises.* Alliance members already have an extensive and, in some cases, longstanding network of bilateral defense cooperation in the Mediterranean. In many cases, multilateral-

⁴“Algeria: Algeria Invited to Participate in NATO Naval Conference,” *Algiers El Watan* (Internet version) September 2, 1998, FBIS-NES-98-245. The U.S. Navy has also conducted joint search-and-rescue exercises with Algeria. See “Algerian, US Navies Conduct First Joint Exercise,” *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 14, 1998.

izing these activities will be appropriate. But where expedient, consideration should be given to “capturing” joint exercises, exchanges, and other activities for the Initiative—in other words, giving them a NATO hat. Overall, this inclusion would be a very cost-effective way of giving substance to a cooperative security strategy in the south. Israel and Egypt would be central actors in this approach, but others, including Tunisia and Morocco, participate in bilateral programs that could be given a NATO dimension.⁵ At a minimum, much existing bilateral cooperation could be described as in the spirit of NATO’s Initiative, along the lines of the practice in PFP.

- *Consider establishing a crisis prevention and confidence-building network for the Mediterranean.* The rise of transregional security challenges, together with the fragmented nature of security cooperation in the region, argues for the creation of a communications network taking advantage of new information technologies. The purposes of the network could range from the dissemination of invitations for expert seminars to the prenotification of military activities and coordination of civil emergency response. Equipment for this purpose could be lodged in participating ministries, or in national security studies institutes.⁶
- *Make an enhanced Mediterranean Initiative part of the post-Washington Summit agenda.* The Summit and the elaboration of a new Strategic Concept have been followed with keen interest by southern Mediterranean states. It is therefore a propitious time to pursue new steps aimed at reinforcing cooperation with

⁵Mediterranean partners such as Tunisia and Morocco have established military cooperation agreements with the United States, Spain, France, and Italy. Egypt has an extensive agenda of military cooperation, which includes combined naval maneuvers with Italy and France (Cleopatra) and a large ground and amphibious force exercise with the participation of the United States, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom (Bright Star). Egypt has also recently held joint military exercises with Greece (Alexandria ‘98). Israel, of course, has its own extensive cooperation program with the United States, and to an increasing extent, with Turkey. See Egyptian Ministry of Defense, *Armed Forces Annual Report*, 1996; and “Greece: Greece, Egypt to Hold Military Maneuvers,” *Athens News Agency*, November 24, 1998, FBIS-WEU-98-328.

⁶The OSCE has been active in setting up such a network in Europe, and arrangements for a similar regional security network were well advanced in the context of ACRS in the mid-1990s.

Dialogue countries. Post-Summit outreach should highlight the development of a region-specific agenda and prospective PFP-like defense cooperation activities. Above all, NATO should stress the importance of a practical, cooperative-security approach to the Mediterranean as an area of growing interest for the Alliance.