

NATO's Outreach to and Cooperation with Mediterranean Countries through the Mediterranean Dialogue

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NATO's Transformation

The Lisbon Summit of Heads of State and Government in November 2010 and its approval of the third Strategic Concept revised by the Alliance since the end of the Cold War marks a major milestone for NATO's transformation. The process leading to the adoption of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept will be remembered as the broadest consultative and most inclusive process to the Organisation's policy formulation. A process in which not only NATO but also Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and EAPC (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) countries have been asked to contribute. It is evident that the process of adaptation of a collective security organisation such as NATO to the fast changing security landscape will be a continuous one and that the security concept of NATO will be refined periodically to ensure that the Organisation is able to meet new security challenges and threats.

At the Rome Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government in November 1991, the Alliance's new Strategic Concept, characterised by inclusiveness and a cooperative approach to security, was revised and made public for the first time. It proposed to Central and Eastern European countries, Russia and all the successor states of the former Soviet Union, to build a new security order together with NATO countries based upon cooperation, rather than confrontation, in the security policy field. NATO's Strategic Concept would in fact be based on three mutually reinforcing elements: dialogue, cooperation and

the maintenance of collective defence capabilities to prevent or successfully manage crises affecting the security of its members.

1991's new Strategic Concept for the Alliance adopted a broader approach to security under which the member countries had to take into account risks of a broader nature, such as those emanating from weapons of mass destruction proliferation, the disruption of the flow of vital resources and actions of terrorism and sabotage. In this broader approach to security, political dialogue and cooperation would play a prominent role. Military forces would be reduced, with greater emphasis on their mobility, flexibility and adaptability to different contingencies, and military capabilities restructured for both crisis management and collective defence.

The Strategic Concept was revised again nine years later and a new Strategic Concept was approved at the 1999 Washington Summit, affirming NATO's role in preserving peace and promoting international security and stability vis-à-vis complex security risks, including oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The 1999 Strategic Concept expresses NATO's enduring purpose and nature, as the embodiment of the transatlantic link between Europe and North America, its fundamental security tasks, identifies the central features of the new security environment, specifies the elements of the Alliance's broad approach to security and provides guidelines for the further adaptation of its military forces. It clarifies NATO's fundamental security tasks, to be performed in accordance with the Washington Treaty and the UN Charter, such as: security; political consultations under article 4 of the Washington Treaty; deterrence and defence under articles 5 and 6; crisis management under

articles 4 and 7; partnership by promoting political dialogue; and cooperation to promote transparency, mutual confidence and joint action.

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue process was defined as an integral part of NATO's co-operative approach to security

The 1999 Strategic Concept also stressed the importance of the Mediterranean Dialogue, defined as an area of special interest to the Alliance. It stated that security in Europe is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue process was defined as an integral part of NATO's co-operative approach to security. It was seen as providing a framework for confidence building, promoting transparency and cooperation in the region, and as reinforcing and being reinforced by other international efforts. The Alliance therefore committed to progressively developing the political, civil and military aspects of the Dialogue with the aim of achieving closer cooperation with, and more active involvement by, partner countries.

New Partners for Peace

At their January 1994 Brussels Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government decided to move forward with the concepts of cooperative security by establishing the Partnership for Peace Programme, which contributed to building a new culture of cooperation through three important features: democratic control of the armed forces, which means their subordination to democratically elected civilian political leaders; defence budget transparency, which is to be discussed in parliaments; and interoperability, allowing NATO and partner countries to join efforts in crisis management and peace support military operations. The first concrete way in which this new concept of partnership was put to the service of the international community was in 1995, when NATO brought together 16 member countries and up to 21 non-NATO partner countries to restore peace in Bosnia. They operated under a UN mandate to implement the decisions agreed in Paris in December 1995 by the parties involved in that conflict and by the international community, following the accords brokered in Dayton.

To end a new conflict in the Balkans in 1999, the Alliance again deployed its forces under a UN mandate, bringing together 16 NATO member countries and 20 non-NATO partner countries as part of the KFOR (Kosovo Force), set up to maintain a safe and secure environment for all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin. In Afghanistan, 46 countries including both NATO and non-NATO partner countries, contribute through the UN mandated ISAF operation (International Security Assistance Force) to helping the Afghan Government establish a stable and secure environment in which sustainable reconstruction and development can take hold. To achieve that, NATO is also helping develop the Afghan government structures necessary to maintain security across the country without the assistance of international forces.

The post-Cold War era saw NATO transform into what it is today: a provider of security and stability. Its peace support missions from the Balkans to Afghanistan have helped and are helping, under UN mandate and in concert with other international actors, to establish a secure environment in which the post-crisis political, social and economic reconstruction can take place; this is of direct benefit to the Muslim populations living in these countries. It should also be taken into account that a number of Mediterranean countries have participated and currently participate in, or contribute in one way or another to the success of these NATO-led operations.

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue

In December 1994, eleven months after the Brussels Summit that launched the PfP (Partnership for Peace), NATO Foreign Ministers decided to establish the Mediterranean Initiative, part of NATO's external adaptation, extending the new and cooperative approach to security launched in 1991 to non-NATO countries in the Mediterranean Region. NATO Foreign Ministers declared their readiness "to establish contacts, on a case-by-case basis, between the Alliance and Mediterranean non-member countries with a view to contributing to the strengthening of regional stability." They directed the North Atlantic Council in permanent session to "continue to review the situation, develop the details of the proposed dialogue and initiate appropriate preliminary contacts." The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was born.

NATO invited five countries, Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, to take part in the Mediterranean Dialogue, which would be aimed at achieving a better mutual understanding between NATO and non-NATO Mediterranean countries; dispel misperceptions about the Alliance among participating countries; and promote good and friendly relations across the region.

The Allies decided that the Mediterranean Dialogue would be based upon a phased approach. Five countries were initially invited and membership would remain open to other countries to be chosen according to the principle of consensus, which governs NATO's decision making process. Indeed Jordan later joined the Mediterranean Dialogue in November 1995 and Algeria in January of the year 2000.

The Mediterranean Dialogue, like all other NATO partnership relations, began as a bilateral initiative (NATO+1) and over time evolved into what we could define today as a multi-bilateral initiative. It allows for multilateral political consultations (NATO+7) and also for regional cooperation through the formula NATO+n, decided at the 2002 NATO Prague Summit. That is to say that two or more countries from the Mediterranean Dialogue could come together for specific cooperative projects, which they have proposed to NATO.

Since 1997, measures of practical cooperation between NATO and Mediterranean Dialogue countries are laid down in an annual Work Programme, which aims at building confidence through cooperation in a number of activities: Information and Press, Civil Emergency Planning, Air Space Management, Science and the Environment, Small Arms and Light Weapons, Crisis Management and Military activities. Over the years, and in line with its progressive character, NATO's MD has gradually taken strength.

At the 1999 Washington Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government, in approving the second revision of NATO's strategic concept since the end of the Cold War, agreed to strengthen the Mediterranean Dialogue's two pillars: political dialogue and practical cooperation.

In a further enhancement of the Mediterranean Dialogue in June 2002, the North Atlantic Council agreed that the strengthening and deepening of relations between NATO and Mediterranean Dialogue countries was among the Alliance's highest priorities. The North Atlantic Council also agreed to a series of measures aimed at strengthening the

MD in the aftermath of 11 September, including consultations between NATO and MD countries on terrorism. And in November 2002, at the Prague Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government decided to upgrade the MD, adopting an inventory of substantially new areas of practical cooperation. The Mediterranean Dialogue is based upon a number of principles:

- *Non-discrimination*, which means that MD partners are offered the same basis for cooperation activities and discussion with NATO.
- *Self-differentiation*: allowing for a tailored approach to the specific needs of each of our partner countries.
- *Inclusiveness*: all MD countries should see themselves as share holders of the same cooperative effort.
- *Two-way engagement*: the MD is a "two-way partnership" in which NATO seeks the partners' contribution for its success through a regular consultation process; special emphasis is placed on practical cooperation.
- *Non-imposition*: MD partners are free to choose the pace and extent of their cooperation, NATO has no wish to impose anything upon them.
- *Complementarity and mutual reinforcement*: efforts of the MD and other international institutions for the region are complementary and mutually reinforcing in nature.

With the Mediterranean Partnership close to reaching ten years of existence, NATO's Foreign Ministers, at their December 2003 meeting in Brussels, decided to look for additional progress beyond the measures adopted at the Prague Summit and tasked the North Atlantic Council to look into developing what they called a more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue by the 2004 Istanbul Summit.

Mediterranean Partnership

At their June 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government offered to elevate the MD to a genuine partnership with the overall objective of contributing to regional security and stability and complementing other international efforts through enhanced practical cooperation, an aim that would be met by achieving interoperability, developing de-

fence reform and contributing to the fight against terrorism. They also indicated that these objectives could be achieved by enhancing both the political and practical dimensions of the Mediterranean Dialogue.

The enhancement of the MD's political dimension included increased consultations at working and Ambassadorial levels in multilateral (NATO+7) and bilateral (NATO+1) format, and the organisation of ad-hoc meetings at Ministerial level or even for Heads of State and Government. For example: three meetings of NATO and MD countries' Foreign Ministers took place in 2004, 2007 and 2008 in Brussels, two meetings of NATO and MD Defence Ministers took place in 2006 in Taormina and in 2007 in Seville. Nine meetings of the NATO and MD countries' Chiefs of Defence have also take place since the 2004 Istanbul Summit. Also, in the context of strengthening the political dimension, the former Secretary General of NATO Jaap de Hoop Scheffer conducted official visits to all MD countries and the current NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has not only started to conduct official bilateral visits to the countries of the region, but has also stated from his first day in office that he intends to position the further enhancement of the MD among his three top priorities during his mandate as NATO Secretary General.

At the Istanbul Summit NATO leaders also decided to significantly enhance the practical dimension of the MD by promoting military-to-military cooperation to achieve interoperability. The conclusions outlined the following priority areas: active participation in selected military exercises to improve the ability of Mediterranean partners' forces to operate with those of the Alliance in contributing to NATO-led operations consistent with the UN Charter, which could include non-Article 5 crisis response operations such as disaster relief, humanitarian relief, search and rescue and peace support operations; combating terrorism, for example through effective intelligence sharing and maritime cooperation, as is the case for the framework of Operation Active Endeavour, the Alliance's maritime mission to detect, deter and disrupt terrorist activity in the Mediterranean; promoting democratic control of armed forces and facilitating transparency in national defence planning and defence budgeting in support of defence reform; contributing to the work of the Alliance on threats posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of

delivery; and enhancing cooperation in the area of civil emergency planning, including the possibility for Mediterranean partners to request assistance from the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre.

A further enhancement of the practical dimension included: the possibility of using NATO Trust Funds; agreeing together with MD partners on action plans covering a wide range of practical, issue-specific cooperative activities; individual cooperation programmes allowing for self-differentiation; the use of existing PfP activities and tools to improve the ability of Alliance and Mediterranean partners' forces to operate together in future NATO-led operations; enhanced participation in appropriate PfP exercises; and enhanced cooperation in scientific and environmental fields.

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In addition, NATO also offered to establish appropriate liaison arrangements at NATO HQ in Brussels and at the Military Cooperation Division at NATO's Strategic Command in Mons in order to enhance coordination of activities among the countries involved, especially in the military field.

Since the 2004 Istanbul Summit, the annual Mediterranean Dialogue Work Programme proposed by NATO has gone from 100 activities and events in 2004 to nearly 700 in 2010, in a wide range of areas of cooperation including: Military Education, Training and Doctrine, Defence Policy and Strategy, Defence Investment, Civil Emergency Planning, Crisis Management, Armaments and Intelligence related activities, Scientific and Environmental Projects and Public Diplomacy activities.

The Individual Cooperation Programmes, concluded and periodically revised by NATO bilaterally with each of our Mediterranean Dialogue partner countries, are proving to be a very effective instrument to tailor our practical cooperation to the specific interests and needs of our partners in the Mediterranean region.

A Joint Public Diplomacy Effort

Since the Istanbul Summit NATO and its MD partner countries have worked together to explain to the public opinion of the Mediterranean region how the new and cooperative approach to security proposed by NATO can be of mutual benefit for NATO and the countries of the region.

A joint public diplomacy effort conducted by NATO and its MD partners is crucial to explain NATO's current policies and goals, while providing opinion leaders, policy-makers, the media and the broader public in the Mediterranean region with a correct understanding of the aims and content of the genuine partnership we are building through our MD. This effort helps build mutual trust and correct misperceptions. Too many people in the Mediterranean have an outdated image of NATO, associated with the Cold War years. It is therefore important to explain the new NATO to the people in the region; the NATO that has helped people in Bosnia, Macedonia and that it is at present helping people in Kosovo and Afghanistan build better lives enabling them to take care of their own security without relying on foreign assistance; the same NATO that is helping the African Union in Darfur, or providing humanitarian relief in Pakistan to address a major humanitarian catastrophe; or helping against the growing threat of piracy at sea.

NATO considers this joint Public Diplomacy conducted together with our Mediterranean Dialogue partner countries as a "two-way communication process" in which NATO engages in a dialogue with its target audiences to establish, build and maintain cooperative relationships over time with key actors shaping public perceptions in MD countries, to promote better mutual understanding and trust.

NATO Public Diplomacy activities have been aimed at establishing a real dialogue with a broad range of target groups in MD countries, placing emphasis on face to face debate and discussion rather than on one-way communication.

International conferences and seminars in the region, as well as visits from opinion leaders, academics, parliamentarians, policy-makers and media representatives are taking place in a framework of listening, showing our MD partners that their interests and ideas are important to NATO and that consequently NATO is open to positively receiving their contribution.

This type of engagement with target audiences in MD countries is one important condition for the success of the Mediterranean Dialogue itself, as it will benefit both Public Diplomacy and political and practical cooperation with our Mediterranean Dialogue partners.