DIIS REPORT

A NEW ROLE FOR NATO IN THE MIDDLE EAST?
ASSESSING POSSIBILITIES AND BARRIERS FOR AN ENHANCED MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE

Helle Malmvig

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Executive Summary

NATO is gradually redirecting its strategy from Eastern and Central Europe to the Middle East. International terrorism, proliferation of WMD and the instability of weak states have created a new security environment and started a second transformation of NATO. This new focus on the Middle East has also moved the Alliance to turn its existing outreach programme with seven states in the Mediterranean/Middle East (the Mediterranean Dialogue) into a real partnership resembling the Partnership for Peace (PfP) model. This report, however, argues that this will be an extremely difficult task since there exists a number of deep-seated obstacles and barriers for creating a genuine partnership along the lines of the PfP Programme. The main impediments are:

- The Arab states in general view NATO and the Mediterranean Dialogue with scepticism and distrust. NATO is seen rather as a security threat than as a security provider and partner.
- The Mediterranean states have different security perceptions and concerns compared to those of NATO, and they are situated in a different security climate.
- In contrast to the case of the former socialist states in Eastern Europe, NATO has very few carrots to offer to the Mediterranean states.
- The armed forces in the Mediterranean states are primarily interested in upholding the political status quo, and are wary of notions of security governance.

Yet, the Mediterranean Dialogue can be strengthened and it has a role to play as a means to improve confidence and defuse tensions between NATO and the Mediterranean states. The report in this respect recommends that NATO focuses on the following activities:

- Establish official national representations for the Mediterranean states at NATO Headquarters.
- Develop cooperation on anti-terrorism and enhance assistance on issues defence reform. Yet paying careful attention to the risks of reinforcing the repressive policies and capabilities of the Arab states.
- Increase cooperation and training within the field of peacekeeping.

Introduction, Aim and Structure

NATO has put the Middle East and the Mediterranean region high on its strategic agenda. At the Istanbul Summit in 2004, it was decided to strengthen the so-called Mediterranean Dialogue. NATO aims to turn the existing Dialogue, with seven Middle Eastern states, into a concrete and practical partnership, modelled on the Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP).[1]

This report will analyse the possibilities – and especially challenges – for an enhancement of the Mediterranean Dialogue. It will argue that although the Mediterranean Dialogue can serve as an important forum for improving trust and defusing tensions between NATO and the Mediterranean states, for the foreseeable future it is very unlikely that the Dialogue can evolve into a genuine partnership along the lines of the PfP Programme.

The report is divided into four main sections. The first part will explain *why* the Alliance is aiming to revitalize the Mediterranean Dialogue and is redirecting its strategic focus from Eastern and Central Europe to the Middle East.[2] Here it will also be outlined *how* NATO aims to move from dialogue to partnership. In the second part, the report will point to a number of crucial barriers and regional conditions, which hinder that the logic and measures of the PfP model can be directly transferred to the Middle East. This part will in particular focus on the powerful role of the military in the Middle East. The third part will briefly discuss the democratic dilemmas which arise with respect to furthering defence reforms and increasing cooperation on countering terrorism with the Mediterranean states. The fourth part will conclude and put forward a set of policy recommendations.[3]

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[1] The seven states are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia.

[2] In general the report will use the term Mediterranean and Mediterranean states instead of Middle East and Middle Eastern states, since this is the official term employed by NATO and since the Middle East comprises several more states than the seven members of the Mediterranean Dialogue. However, it should be noted that some of the Dialogue countries do not border the Mediterranean at all (Jordan and Mauritania), and that several of the member states usually are taken to belong to the Middle East (in particular Jordan, Israel and Egypt).

[3] The following analysis is based on academic work, policy articles, non-classified documents and a limited number of interviews and talks with the diplomatic representations in Copenhagen, at NATO Headquarters in Brussels and SHAPE, and at NATO's Subcommand in Madrid.

Reinvigorating the Mediterranean Dialogue: Why and How

The Record of the Mediterranean Dialogue so far

The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was launched in 1994 concurrently with the PfP Programme with the East and Central European states. The principal goals of the MD were to enhance security and stability in the region and to achieve a better understanding and level of trust between the Alliance and the countries of the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern region.

Until now the main activities of the Dialogue have taken the form of political consultation and information exchange, whereas the practical cooperative activities have been minimal. The Dialogue countries have, for instance, attended seminars, conferences, and research workshops, participated in civil-emergency planning courses and in NATO's Fellowship programme and they have visited NATO's Headquarter and military institutions. The Dialogue countries have also been able to observe NATO/PfP military exercises on invitation, but the most significant type of military cooperation has taken place outside of the framework of the Dialogue. Egypt, Morocco and Jordan have participated in the SFOR/IFOR operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Jordanian and Moroccan troops have taken part in the KFOR operations in Kosovo.

The Mediterranean Dialogue has, in other words, primarily been a political forum for discussions and dissemination of information, and has often been referred to as a mere 'talking shop'.[4] In general the initiative has not been considered as a critical activity of NATO, and little attention and resources have accordingly been devoted to the programme. Moreover, the Dialogue countries themselves have also been reluctant to participate in the activities and seminars proposed by NATO, and have often viewed the MD with scepticism and mistrust.[5] In comparison with the PfP Programme, the Mediterranean Dialogue has hence only produced relatively modest results.

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[4] See Donelly, Chris (2004) 'Forging a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East', *NATO Review, Istanbul Summit Special*, Kadry Said, Mohamed (2004) *Assessing NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue*, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies p. 2; Malmvig, Helle (2004) 'From Diplomatic Talking Shop to Powerful Partnership', *DIIS Brief,* no. 35.

[5] See e.g. Dokus, Thanos (2003) *NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Prospects and Policy Recommendations*; Larrabee, Stephen, Lesser, Ian, Greer, Jerrold and Zanini, Michele (1998) 'NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas', *RAND report,* RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, USA.

A Changing Security Environment

The relative lack of interest in the Mediterranean Dialogue should especially be seen in light of the security environment of the 1990s. In the wake of the end of the Cold War, NATO was seeking to reach out to former adversaries of the Warsaw Pact and to develop new strategies that were to counter a wide spectrum of 'soft security threats' such as ethnic conflicts, economic distress, and failed states.[6] NATO was preoccupied with Eastern enlargement, its relationship with Russia, and its operations in the Balkans. Given this strategic agenda of the Alliance, the Middle East/Mediterranean was not perceived as a particularly important region. As one author puts it: 'With all that going on, it is hardly surprising that the Mediterranean might well have been Mars'. [7]

This is now changing. Following the terror attacks on September 11th and the completion of the second round of enlargement, the agenda and priorities of NATO are shifting toward the Middle East. NATO is seeking to counter threats of global terror and proliferation of WMD and the Alliance is already conducting operation *Active Endeavour* in the Mediterranean, the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, and it is involved in the training of Iraqi security forces.[8]

The new focus on the Middle East is also related to an increasing concern in the West with the poor political and economic conditions in the region. Recently many Western governments have launched their own bilateral initiatives that are to further democratic practices in the Middle East, and comprehensive reform and partnership programmes have been introduced or revived within the framework of the G8 and the EU's Barcelona Process.[9] These reform initiatives are seen as long-term security strategies, which are to tackle the very root causes of terrorism, radicalism and political instability.

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[6] See NATO's Strategic Concept, 1999, Washington D.C., 23-24 April 1999

[7] See Neep, Daniel (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa' *RUSI Newsbrief* 2004, vol. 24, no. 6, p. 64.

[8] See e.g. Larrabee, Stephen (2003) "Recasting NATO for a New Strategic Era: toward a New Agenda" paper prepared for the conference 'NATO and the Future: Risk and relevance; Challenges and Opportunities' 28-29 October 2003

[9] For a brief overview on recent national reform initiatives in the region and on the EU's reform agenda see Youngs, Richard (2004) 'Europe's Uncertain Pursuit of Middle East Reform', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 45, 2004, pp. 5-8.

The US in particular has wished to expand NATO's engagement in the region and has sought to tie the Alliance to its so-called Greater Middle East Initiative.[10] For some time leading policy makers have also proposed that the democratization of the Middle East should become a new transatlantic project.[11] Yet NATO members remain divided over NATO's possible role in the region. Iraq is obviously one of the core issues dividing the Alliance, but NATO member states also disagree on the extent to which the Middle East should become NATO's 'new central front'.[12]

Given these divisions, the preparations for the Istanbul Summit in 2004 became focused on a somewhat smaller agenda; namely how NATO could expand its relations with the region through a revitalisation of the Mediterranean Dialogue. At the summit, NATO agreed to 'elevate the Mediterranean Dialogue to a genuine partnership',[13] and launched the new Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.[14] From a relatively neglected project in the 1990s the Mediterranean Dialogue has therefore now risen to the top of the agenda of NATO.

But how does NATO plan to move the MD into a partnership, and which priorities and principles are to guide the partnership? This is the topic of the following sections.

[10] See Fiorenza, Nick (2004) 'A greater NATO Role in the Greater Middle East' ISIS Europe, *NATO Notes*, Vol. 6, No. 1, February 2004.

[11] See Asmus, Ronald D. (2003) 'Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance' in *Foreign Affairs* September/October; Everts, Steven, (2004*)* 'The Ultimate Test Case: Can Europe and America forge a joint strategy for the Wider Middle East', *International Affairs* 80, 4, 2004, pp. 665-686; Everts, Steven (2003) 'Why NATO should keep the Mideast Peace', *Financial Times,* 29 July 2003.

[12] See for instance Marshall, Will and Rudolf, Peter (2004) 'Should the Middle East be NATO's new central front?', *NATO Review*, Istanbul Summit Special 2004, pp. 16-21. Other contentious issues related to the Middle East are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and whether NATO peacekeeping forces should be deployed to monitor a future Israeli-Palestinian Peace Settlement. See Fiorenza, Nick (2004) 'A greater NATO Role in the Greater Middle East'.

[13] See NATO Update 29 June 2004, *'NATO elevates Mediterranean Dialogue to a genuine partnership and launches Istanbul Cooperation Initiative'*, http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/06-june/index-e.htm

[14] The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative is a bilateral cooperation initiative focusing on issues such as defence reform, interoperability, and the fight against terrorism, illegal trafficking, and proliferation of WMD. It is targeted at interested countries in the so-called broader Middle Eastern region, who are not already members of the Mediterranean Dialogue. See "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative" *NATO Policy Document,* 9 July 2004, http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-cooperation.htm

How to Move from Dialogue to Partnership: Principles and Priority Areas

The formal aim of an enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue, as stipulated in NATO documents, remains essentially the same as in 1994. The strengthened Dialogue is to build confidence between NATO and the Mediterranean partners and it is to contribute to regional security and stability through practical cooperation and political dialogue.[15]

The basic principles that are to guide a more effective Mediterranean Dialogue can be structured into five categories. These are:

- *Progression.* The partnership is a progressive process, allowing for an increase in the number of partners, activities, and types of cooperation.

- *Self-differentiation.* Participating countries can intensify cooperation and relations with NATO individually, and are able to choose from the activities offered according to interest.

- *Co-ownership.* The partnership is to be a joint project between NATO and the partner countries, where both sides are committed. The goals, content and activities of the partnership are to be formulated in close consultation with partner countries.

- *Practical cooperation with mutual benefits.* The renewed MD is especially to enhance the practical and military side of the partnership. In line with the principle of co-ownership, cooperation is to be furthered in areas of common interest, where NATO and the partner countries face common security problems.

- *Complementarity.* The partnership is to avoid duplication or competition with existing partnership programmes in the region, especially those of the EU and the G8. NATO is to focus on areas where it can add value to existing initiatives.[16]

[15] See Istanbul Summit Communiqué, Press release 2004 (096), 28 June, http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm

[16] Overall these principles are similar to those which hitherto have guided the MD. Yet, there is a stronger emphasis on the principle of co-ownership and consultation, and a stronger emphasis on enhancing the practical and military side of the MD.

In accordance with the wish for more practical cooperation, NATO especially plans to further cooperation within four areas:[17]

- *Cooperation on the fight against terrorism.* For instance by sharing intelligence, by cooperating on border security, and by maritime cooperation within the framework of Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean.

- *Cooperation on non-proliferation of WMD.* For instance by intelligence sharing and by a stronger coordination of partners' interdiction efforts.

- C*ooperation on peace support operations and disaster relief operations.* This demands greater interoperability to be furthered through active participation in military exercises, education and training activities.

- *Defence reform and security governance.* Priority will most likely be given to assistance and advice on defence planning, budgeting, and transparency as tools for rationalization and modernization of the defence sector in the Southern Mediterranean countries.[18]

NATO, in short, aims to give more substance and practical content to the Mediterranean Dialogue by enhancing military cooperation and training. Inspired by the successful PfP model in Eastern and Central Europe, the idea is that practical cooperation in areas where NATO and the Mediterranean states have a common interest and a common perception of threats, serves to increase the security of both NATO and the Dialogue states and helps to defuse tensions and mistrust between them. According to this liberal-idealistic logic of *cooperative security*, security and stability are hence promoted through collaborative rather than confrontational relations.[19] Cooperation is taken to create a 'virtuous spiral'

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[17] See especially *"A more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue" NATO Policy Document,* 9 July 2004, http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-meddial.htm

[18] NATO is also considering applying the means of individual Action Plans as in the PfP Programme, in order to further more progressive and result-oriented cooperation.

[19] On the concept of cooperative security see especially: Nolan, Janne E. (1994) 'The concept of Cooperative Security' in Nolan, Janne E. (ed.) *Global Engagement. Cooperation and Security in the 21ʳˢᵗ Century,* The Brookings Institution, Washington DC; Cohen, Richard and Mihalka, Michael (2001)*, '*From Individual security to International Stability' in *Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order,* Marshall Center papers, no. 3; On cooperative security as grand strategy see: Posen, Barry R. and Ross, Andrew L. (1996/7) 'Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy', in *International Security,* 21 (winter 1996/7) pp. 5–53.

of trust through processes of positive learning and socialisation and accordingly helps to prevent conflict in the long-term.[20] By transferring some of the collaborative measures and practical military activities of the PfP Programme in the East to the Mediterranean, it is hence hoped that the MD will become a more effective outreach programme than has hitherto been the case.

The PfP Programme in Eastern and Central Europe: A Model of Inspiration?

As the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Partnership for Peace Programme started on a relatively small scale and was mainly seen as a diplomatic tool. NATO aimed to normalize relations with the states of the former Warsaw Pact and to reach out to the countries in Eastern and Central Europe without alienating Russia. PfP was to help hinder that new dividing lines were created in Europe and that instability erupted as a result of the pace of political change in Eastern and Central Europe.[21]

The initial activities and goals of the PfP Programme, however, quickly expanded as trust and confidence increased between NATO and the partner states.[22] Through political consultations, seminars, military exercises and cooperation – e.g. on arms control, peacekeeping or defence reform – the PfP Programme helped to increase the interoperability of the partner countries and provided assistance with respect to the development of democratic defence structures.

In this respect, individual actions plans and review processes of the partner states' capabilities to operate with NATO forces, and their progress on enhancing democratic control of the armed forces, played a significant role. Action plans helped to ensure that the partnership evolved and that reforms were undertaken. PfP did accordingly not only serve as a means to raise levels of confidence between NATO and the former socialist states, but also paved the way for enlargement, by ensuring that aspiring countries started a process of

[20] See Johansson, Elisabeth (2001) 'Cooperative security in the 21st century? NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue', *Conference paper* for 'La seguridad europeas en el siglo XXI' Universidad de Granada, 5-9 noviembre de 2001, pp. 4-6.

[21] See e.g. Groves, John R (1999) 'PfP and the State Partnership Program: Fostering engagement and progress', *Parameters* vol. 29, 1. Spring; Kupchan, Charles (1994) 'Strategic Visions', *World Policy Journal*, Fall; Szonyi, Istvan (1998), 'PfP as a Process of Adaption', *Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 11, 1.

[22] See 'Szonyi, Istvan (1998) 'PfP as a Process of Adaption'

difficult and necessary reforms of their military forces, with the aim of adapting to NATO requirements and values.

NATO's PfP Programme, in short, contributed to the advancement of extensive reforms and has helped to further stability and security in the Eastern Europe.[23] In light of this success, the Alliance therefore seeks to transfer parts of the PfP model to the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern region, yet without holding out the promise of potential membership.[24]

It will, however, be very difficult to achieve the same form of success in the Mediterranean region. Firstly, because many of the difficulties and obstacles that hitherto have hindered progress within the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue are still in place, and secondly because the push for cooperation and reform in East and Central Europe was closely tied to the prospect of membership and a strong wish for further integration with the West.

The following sections will focus on some of the main barriers: Firstly on how NATO and the Dialogue itself are perceived in the region, secondly on the specific security problems, which characterise the region, and thirdly on the different logics/mechanisms of cooperation, which applied to the East and Central European countries compared to the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern countries.

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[23] See Donolly, Chris (2004) "Forging a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East" p. 26

[24] See 'A more Ambitious and Expanded Framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue' *NATO Policy Document,* 9 July, 2004

Barriers and Obstacles for a Deepening of the Mediterranean Dialogue: Perceptions from the South

One of the main barriers that up till now have hindered a deepening of the Dialogue is that NATO is largely viewed with suspicion and distrust in the region.[25] In general NATO is perceived more as a potential security threat than as a potential partner and security provider. The Mediterranean countries are sceptical about the intentions and agenda of NATO in the region, and fear that the Dialogue will be used as a leverage to mingle in their internal affairs or even as an excuse for outright military intervention. Such fears have not been reduced recently, but rather reinforced by the war in Iraq and by Western governments' statements about the need for political change in the region.[26]

The general scepticism toward NATO is also due to the fact that NATO primarily is seen as a military alliance dominated by the US.[27] Few in the region are familiar with the political side of NATO, and the Alliance is still perceived in its 'Cold War incarnation.' As one analyst has put it: 'When Arab publics hear that NATO is talking to their governments, they tend to assume it is to issue an ultimatum before launching an invasion.'[28] This also means that the Mediterranean government are less inclined to cooperate too openly with NATO – out of fears for the reaction of their peoples – and that few in the Arab world are aware of the very existence and aims of the Mediterranean Dialogue.[29]

[25] The following detects general patterns in the *Arab* Mediterranean states' perception of NATO and hence excludes Israel in so far as Israel holds a positive perception of NATO and the Mediterranean Dialogue and has applied for membership of the Alliance several times. On Israel's perception of the MD see Larrabee, S., Greer, J., Lesser, I. and Zanini, M. (1998) 'NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas' pp. 65-66.

[26] At the press conference following the first meeting between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from NATO and the Dialogue countries in December 2004, it was hence characteristically remarked that there was a lack of confidence between the Mediterranean states and NATO, and that this situation would not improve until the situation in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were resolved. See *NATO Speeches* 8 December 2004, Palais d'Egmont, Bruxelles, http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2004/s041208a.htm

[27] This also means that the often very negative perception of US foreign policies in the region, in particular in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, inflict on NATO's image as a whole. See also Dokos, Thanos (2003) "NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Prospects and Policy Recommendations"*, Conference Paper* 'NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue', 17-19 Jan 2003 Athens, organized by ELIAMEP and NATO's Office of Information and Press, p. 3.

[28] See Neep, Daniel (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa' p. 65.

[29] See Larrabee, S., Greer, J., Lesser, I. and Zanini, M. (1998) 'NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas'.

Moreover, the Mediterranean governments also express reservations about the MD because of its inherent asymmetrical character. The Mediterranean Dialogue is seen as a security initiative, which first and foremost is driven and defined by NATO, rather than as a jointly owned project based on consultation and mutual interest. This is compounded by the fact that the Mediterranean states seldom are able to speak with one voice and that relations with NATO mainly are conducted on a bilateral basis.[30] As Aliboni has argued: 'for the Arab states, the security cooperation offered by the West is never fully inclusive […] They exclude all Arab influence on assessment and decisions. In fact, they fall short of a partnership in a true sense.'[31]

This issue of asymmetry and lack of co-ownership is closely tied to the different security environments and perceptions of security, which exist between NATO and the Dialogue states. NATO is especially focused on broad security threats such as terrorism, proliferation of WMD, organised crime, illegal immigration, and political instability emanating from the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern region. However, the dialogue states are foremost concerned with more traditional types of threats. Arab-Israeli relations rank particularly high on the regional agenda, not only because of the deadlock in the Middle East Peace Process, but also because of the ongoing arms race in the region and Israel's possession of nuclear weapons.[32] Moreover, border disputes and regional rivalries still reign between the Mediterranean countries. Israel's borders with neighbouring states and with the Palestinian Authority are of course a continuous source of dispute, but relations between Morocco and Algeria, for instance, also

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[30] It is especially the Arab-Israeli conflict which has hindered multilateral activities, but tensions and border disputes between some of the Arab states have also made multilateral cooperation difficult.

[31] See Aliboni, Roberto (2002) 'Strengthening NATO-Mediterranean Relations: A Transition to Partnership' *NATO Seminar*, Rome, 30 September 2002, p. 3. Daniel Neep has equally argued that Europe's assessment of security threats in the Mediterranean provides a form of checklist of concerns that the Mediterranean states are to tick off: 'terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking, people smuggling, energy security, potential refugee inflows and migration', See Neep, Daniel (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa'. In other words, there is a sense in the Mediterranean countries that they are constructed as objects of Western security policies and initiatives rather than as partners.

[32] It is therefore not proliferation of WMD to non-state actors that constitutes the main concern of Arab states, but rather the possession of WMD by state actors. See Neep, Daniel (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa' p. 65.

remain tense, due to the conflict over Western Sahara and Algeria's support to the *Polisario* movement.[33]

Above all, however, the Arab governments are preoccupied with internal threats to their continued survival and hold on political power. They face a deep crisis of legitimacy and this has led to increasing social unrest, internal violence and terror. The most gruesome example is Algeria, where up to 100.000 were killed in a virtual civil war between the security forces and various Islamic militant groups in the 1990s.[34] But also the governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco are confronted with both secular and Islamist opposition groups, and the regimes have clamped down strongly on the latter groups in particular. In other words, to remain in power and retain control of the political system, the Arab governments are relying heavily on their security forces. This means that the military is closely involved in political life and that there is a widespread tendency to equate national security interest with regime survival.[35]

The internal and regional security problems, which mark the Mediterranean countries, are thus very different from those of NATO's. In effect the 'two sides' disagree over which security problems that need to be addressed most urgently and how security is to be defined. This obviously makes the notion of common interest and common security, on which the Dialogue is premised, difficult to pursue in practice, and the Dialogue states therefore easily come to perceive the MD as a forum, which mainly serves the security needs and concerns of NATO. Even though there is an increasing interest on part of NATO to engage in further cooperation, this interest is not equally mirrored in the South. As NATO's Secretary General phrased it recently: 'You cannot say that there is a big drive in the Arab world at the moment for NATO.'[36]

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[33] Polisario (Frente Popular para la liberación de Saquit el Hamra y de Oro) is an independence movement who is fighting for self-determination and independence from Morocco, which has controlled Western Sahara since Spanish withdrawal in 1973. The movement is supported by the Algerian government. Libya and Mauritania have also been heavily involved in the conflict.

[34] See e.g. Stora, Benjamin (2001) 'La Guerre Invisible Algérie, années 90' Paris, *Presses de Sciences Po*; Spencer, Claire (1998) 'The End of International Enquiries? The UN Eminent Persons' Mission to Algeria', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 3,3, pp. 126-133.

[35] See e.g. Neep, Daniel (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa'; Tanner, Fred (2003) 'Security Governance. The difficult task of security democratization in the Mediterranean', *EuroMeSCo Briefs*, May 2003, p. 6.

[36] Quoted from Monaco, Annalisa (2004) 'NATO's Outreach to the Mediterranean: From Dialogue to Partnership', *NATO Notes*, vol. 6, 1, p. 4.

This remark also illustrates one of the important differences between the East and Central Europe and the Mediterranean. In the states of the former Eastern block there was an immense interest in being included in Western security arrangements and institutions at the end of the Cold War. The PfP process was perceived as a gateway to membership of NATO and possibly of the EU. In contrast to the Mediterranean states, the East and Central European states felt they belonged to Europe and the West, and they saw NATO as a form of soft security guarantee against Russia.[37] The success of the PfP process – and later of MAP – did consequently not only rest on a logic of *cooperative security*, but also on a logic of *magnetism*.[38] For the East and Central European states, NATO was an attractive rather than threatening power. Closer integration with NATO and the prospect of membership served as important 'carrots' for undertaking difficult reforms of the defence sector and civil-military relations, as stipulated by NATO.[39] The PfP process was in this sense also characterised by an asymmetrical relationship between NATO and the partner states. But this asymmetry was – at least implicitly – accepted by the latter, in so far as they knew that if they acted according to the requirements and expectations of NATO, they would eventually be able to join the Alliance as full members.

This incentive for cooperation and reform, however, lacks with respect to Mediterranean states. Perhaps with the exception of Israel, the Mediterranean states are not interested in – and are not offered – a potential membership of the Alliance. NATO therefore possesses few 'carrots' that can provide a real incentive for the Mediterranean states to deepen cooperation and relations with NATO.

Yet, there are areas where the Mediterranean states are likely to cooperate with NATO and where NATO can bring specific skills and experience from the PfP process to the Mediterranean Dialogue. However, as it will be discussed below, by expanding cooperation within these areas, NATO may risk enhancing the autonomous powers and repressive capabilities of the military establishments.

[37] See e.g. Pilegaard, Martin Jess (2003) 'Defence Reforms in Central Europe', *European Security,* vol. 12, no. 2. pp. 122-135, p. 125

[38] On Europe as a magnet and disciplinary power see Wæver, Ole (2000) 'The EU as a security actor: reflections from a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security orders' in Kelstrup, Morten and Williams, Michael C. (eds.) *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, security and community*, London: Routledge, pp. 250-94.

[39] Zvonimir, Mahec (2003) 'Security and Defence Reform and the Roles of State Institutions', paper from Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales Y Estratégicos.

Defence Reform and Democratic Dilemmas

Defence reform and counter-terrorism constitute two areas of potential co-operation, where both NATO and the Mediterranean states appear to share a common security challenge and a common interest in collaboration. These two areas have also been singled out in many leading policy articles and NATO documents as areas of cooperation that can serve to upgrade the practical side of the MD; thereby moving the partnership beyond its present status as a diplomatic 'talking shop.'

Defence Reform

For NATO defence reforms constitute an obvious field of cooperation for two reasons: Firstly, because such reforms will strengthen the ability of the Mediterranean states to contribute to international operations and their capability – in the long term – to work together with NATO forces in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. The participation of the Mediterranean states in international missions will help to further cooperative military relations between NATO and the dialogue countries, and will in addition enhance the legitimacy of future missions in Muslim and/or Arab countries. Secondly, because defence reform is an area where the Alliance has considerable experience from the Partnership for Peace Programme. This experience gives NATO its own niche and comparative advantage in relation to the EU's Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process).[40] NATO is well aware that the EU's comprehensive programme in the Mediterranean is far better equipped to address the deep-seated social, political and economic problems of the region, but with respect to reformation of the security sector, NATO seems better skilled to introduce such reforms.[41]

For the Mediterranean countries in turn, NATO assistance and education on matters of defence reform can contribute to the efforts of rationalization and modernization of the armed forces. The Mediterranean countries spend on aver-

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[40] The Barcelona Process is a comprehensive partnership programme with ten Mediterranean/Middle Eastern states launched in 1995. The partnership is divided into three 'baskets' and addresses security and political issues, economic issues, and human and cultural issues. For a short introduction and discussion of the Partnership in Danish see also Malmvig, Helle (2004) 'Fra urolig periferi til venlige naboer', *DIIS Brief*, Jan. 2004

[41] See e.g. Donnelly, Chris (2004) 'Forging a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East'; Neep, Daniel, (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa' p. 66.

age 5-7 percent of their GDP on the defence sector and defence spending is still on the increase in the region.[42] At the same time, the Mediterranean countries are confronted with stagnating growth rates, a lack of human and economic development and a growing population rate.[43] From a developmental perspective there is hence much need for a more effective use and management of existing resources in the Mediterranean region.

In many of the Mediterranean states there is also a demand for a further professionalization[44] and modernization of the military.[45] It is increasingly recognised that in order to enhance the military's corporate identity and its prestige at large, it is necessary to modernize the military by upgrading equipment and providing proper education and training.[46] Moreover, modernization and professionalization is also seen as a means to improve the image of the military both at the domestic and international scene.[47] Especially Jordan and Algeria are eager to acquire new technologies and to take part in exercises and training programmes provided by NATO. Thus, when it comes to issues of defence reform, NATO has something to offer to the Mediterranean states which they are genuinely interested in.

Yet, the Mediterranean states are much more reluctant to address the other side of defence reform relating to issues of democratic control of the armed forces. Modernization and rationalization of the armed forces can be said only to constitute one side of the coin of defence reform. The other side of that coin is *security governance*, meaning the maintenance (or development) of civilian control of the military, parliamentary oversight, transparency in budgeting and the safeguard-

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[42] See Tanner, Fred (2003), 'Security Governance. The difficult task of security democratization in the Mediterranean' p. 5.

[43] See UNDP Human Development Report 2002, http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/

[44] Professionalization here meaning 'the introduction of modern military equipment, established procedures for recruitment and promotions and advanced training' See Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', *Political Science Quarterly,* spring 2000, vol. 115, 1, p. 67

[45] See e.g. Calderbank, Selwa (2005) 'NATO and the Middle East', *Palestinian Chronicle*, 28. January, 2005. Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', p. 69.

[46] Ibid.

[47] As Ulla Holm has argued with respect to Algeria, the military as well as President Bouteflika are looking to modernize and professionalize the army, in order to be able to take effectively part in international operations (in particular in the fight against terrorism) and in order to re-habilitate the army in the eyes of the Algerian people. See Holm, Ulla (2005) 'Bouteflika's Second Presidential Term', *Mediterranean Politics,* vol. 10, 1.

ing of human rights and the rule of law.[48] In well-established democracies with long traditions of civilian control, defence reform will mainly involve questions of modernization and rationalization of the defence sector, but with respect to non-democratic or transitional states, defence reform also denotes wide ranging democratic reforms of governing structures.[49] In relation to the PfP Programme NATO has therefore not only provided assistance on the military and technical side of defence reform, but also on how to democratize civil-military relations; ensuring above all the democratic control of the military.

Given NATO's experience with the promotion of defence reforms in transitional or non-democratic states, it has therefore been suggested that the issue of security governance also should become part of a strengthened Mediterranean Dialogue, and that NATO, in this way, could contribute to the broader Western strategy of furthering democracy in the Middle East.[50] Yet, while some of the Mediterranean states certainly are interested in modernization and rationalization of the armed forces, they are very weary of any notions of security governance. Introducing the concept of security governance into the Mediterranean Dialogue will therefore be highly controversial and extremely difficult. As it will be spelled out in the following sections, in the Mediterranean countries the political power of the military is immense and the military is closely involved in many aspects of civilian life. This makes questions of transparency, defense planning, and civilian control extremely sensitive, and it is therefore unlikely that the seven Mediterranean states will accept that security governance becomes part of the agenda of the Mediterranean Dialogue.

The Powerful Role of the Military in the Mediterranean/Middle East

Civil-military relations vary between the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern countries. In Israel, for instance, the armed forces are clearly under civilian and democratic control, although the military arguably has a much stronger influence than in other democratic states. In Algeria, on the other hand, the military constitutes the real political power in the country, and the president's survival

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[48] See Tanner, Fred (2003), 'Security Governance. The difficult task of security democratization in the Mediterranean'

[49] See Pilegaard, Martin Jess (2003) 'Defense Reform in Central Europe', *IIS Report* 2003/5, p. 3

[50] See e.g. Cagaptay, Soner (2004) 'NATO's Transformative Powers', *National Review* 2 April, 2004, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Neep, Daniel (2004), 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa'

is almost completely dependent on the support and loyalty of the generals, whereas in Jordan or Morocco the military is very much in the personal control of the monarchs.[51] Despite these differences, the Arab states can in general be characterized as highly militarized states, in which the military exercises great political power and where the regimes in turn owe much of their continued survival to the military establishments.[52]

In the 1960s, the Middle East emerged as one of the most militarized regions in the world, both in terms of the size of the military and in terms of military expenditure in proportion to economic output. It was not exceptional to spend over 15 percent of the GDP on the military, and a large percentage of imported good were arms and military supplies.[53] In this period direct military interventions in political life were also common. A succession of military coups and counter coups marked the 1950s, 60s and 70s and brought military officers into political office. The military became strongly involved in political life taking up top-level positions both in government and in the bureaucracy. Thus, during Nasser's reign in Egypt the number of officers in the cabinet peaked to 65 percent of all positions.[54] In the eyes of the Arab public – and even in the eyes of some western analysts – the military's direct political role was, however, largely condoned. The military was seen as a vibrant new force, which could ensure national unity and development.[55] The young military officers promised to modernize the Arab societies and to bring the Arab states real independence from the former Western colonial powers. The military's involvement in politics was welcomed and the army states enjoyed considerable popular legitimacy.[56]

[51] Different typologies of civil-military relations in the Middle East have hence been made. Typically authors distinguish between radical military states such as Egypt, Syria and Algeria which have a history of direct military intervention, monarchical states such as Morocco, Saudi-Arabia and Jordan, where the military is the main prop of the dynastic regimes, and democratic states such as Israel and Turkey in which the state predominates but where the military is allowed to play a role in politics. See e.g. Owen, Roger (1992) *State, Power & Politics in the making of the modern Middle East,* Routledge, London; Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military Professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', *Political Science Quarterly,* vol. 115, 1, pp. 67-93, Bill, James & Springborg, Robert (1994) *Politics in the Middle East,* Fourth Edition, HarperCollins, NY.

[52] See Owen, Roger (1992) *State, Power & Politics in the making of the modern Middle East*; Kamrava (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East'; Bill & Springborg, (1994) *Politics in the Middle East.*

[53] See Bill, James & Sprinborg, Robert (1994) *Politics in the Middle East*, p.245.

[54] See Bill, James & Springborg, Robert (1994) *Politics in the Middle East*, p. 247.

[55] See Kamrava (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', pp. 72-73; Bill, James & Springborg, Robert (1994) *Politics in the Middle East,* p.252.

[56] See Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', p. 252.

Over the last two decades the *direct* involvement of the military as well as its popular legitimacy have, however, declined. The armies have now become more professionalized, and they are not playing the same explicit political role as they used to. But the size and costliness of the military is still growing in the region and the 'practice' of military coups has not been completely eradicated.[57] In Algeria, the army took over power and annulled the second round of parliamentary elections in 1992, and in Tunisia Habit Bourguiba was in effect forced to resign and replaced by general Zain Ben Ali, a former director of military security.[58] Yet today the military exercises much of its political power through its involvement in civilian and economic life, where it has become an important economic actor in itself. In Egypt for instance, the military is involved in agriculture, national infrastructure, and manufacturing of both weapons and civilian goods. The civilian and military sectors have become highly intertwined and officers take up the roles of managers, businessmen, and engineers, opening the doors for widespread corruption and misconduct.[59] Moreover, throughout the Middle East military officers are granted special privileges and exclusive access to goods and services; e.g. housing, health care, education, automobiles, and duty free imports.[60]

In the monarchies in Jordan and Morocco, a slightly different civil-military pattern can be observed. The military is more professionalized and less directly involved in political and civilian life compared to the military in e.g. Egypt or Algeria.[61] Since the 1950s there have been no military coups and military officers can for instance not take part in elections.[62] In the two monarchies, it is the King who in effect controls the defense sector and the intelligence services,

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[57] Between 1994 and 2003 military expenditures in the Middle East as a whole have hence increased with 48 percent. Moreover, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are the two largest importers of conventional weapons from the United States in the world. See *SIPRI Yearbook*, 2004 on arms transfers and military expenditures http://www.sipri.org

[58] See Owen, Roger (1992) *State, Power & Politics in the making of the modern Middle East*, p. 207.

[59] See Bill, James & Springborg, Robert (1994) *Politics in the Middle East*, p. 264.

[60] Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East'

[61] Tell, Nawaf (2004) 'Jordanian Security Sector Governance: Between Theory and Practice', *Conference Paper*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF); see also Owen, Roger (1992) '*State, Power & Politics in the making of the modern Middle East*', pp. 208-10; Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East'.

[62] There were, however, two attempted assassinations of the Moroccan King in 1971 and 1972, which led the King to purge and reorganize the army, see Owen, Roger (1992) *State, Power & Politics in the making of the modern Middle East*, p. 209.

and he who is the real commander of the armed forces.[63] Loyalty to the King is essential and is the sole criteria of promotion in the military.[64] Parliamentary oversight over defence budgeting and planning is accordingly virtually absent. In Jordan there is no parliamentary defence or security committee, and the defence budget goes through parliament as a single budget item without documentation or debate. However, despite of firm monarchical control over the military, as in other countries in the Middle East, the Moroccan and Jordanian monarchs ultimately depend on the support and loyalty of the armed forces.[65]

The omnipresent power of the military in both civilian and political life has created a complex relationship between the political system and the military. The incumbent regimes are, on one hand, attempting to control the power of the military by restraining its ability to directly interfere in politics as in the 1960s and 70s. On the other hand, in the face of growing opposition to the regimes and the resurgence of radical Islamism, the very survival of the incumbent political rulers are increasingly dependent on the support and repressive capabilities of the military. The deep crisis of legitimacy which many Arab regimes face has, in other words, created a precarious alliance of regime and military, where both are striving to uphold status quo and keeping oppositional movements in check. This means in turn that the military has become very much focused on internal 'security threats' to the survival of the regimes, and that the line between regime and state, internal and external security is increasingly blurred. In Algeria for instance the military has been fiercely involved in the repression and crushing of Islamist opposition groups, and in Egypt military courts have been widely used to try members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements. Throughout the Middle East, the military is deeply involved in the pursuit of opposition groups and critics of the regimes – secular as well as religious – who are calling for change. The military has, in short, become the very backbone of Middle Eastern states.[66]

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[63] Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', p. 85.

[64] Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', Ibid.

[65] Roger Owen has even argued that Jordan and Morocco are the two Middle Eastern regimes that rely most heavily on the support of the army for survival. Owen, Roger (1992) *State, Power & Politics in the making of the modern Middle East,* p. 208.

[66] Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', p. 75.

In contrast to the 1950s and 1960s the revolutionary spirit and quest for change, which characterized the military, have disappeared, and the military has now emerged as the prime guarantor of the status quo in the Middle East. The goal of the military is no longer to push for development and modernization: 'Today's goal is simply to hang on to power'.[67] While this credo often puts the regimes and the military on equal footing, it also makes the military establishments adverse to calls for political reforms and democratization. Not only because reforms will infringe on the special privileges and powers obtained by the military over the last 50 years, but also because democratic reforms are widely seen as a threat to internal stability and ultimately as a threat to the regimes' continued existence.[68]

This situation, on one hand, obviously makes processes of security governance much needed in the region. On the other hand, it is also clear that NATO cannot be the *demandeur*. Furthering such reforms will be a formidable task and cannot be undertaken without the acceptance of the ruling politico-military elites. Even small-scale reforms such as increasing the level of transparency in the defence sector or creating oversight committees will demand that the ruling elites themselves accept and work actively towards the establishment of strong and independent parliamentary and bureaucratic institutions.[69] In other words, before the incumbent regimes and/or the military establishment have embraced the overall idea of political liberalization, it will be extremely difficult for NATO to promote the concept of security sector governance.[70]

Democratic Dilemmas and Ambiguous Goals

These severe difficulties seem to have led NATO to downplay the democratic aspects of defence reform. Furthering defense reform will most likely not come under the overall heading of 'democracy promotion' but instead under the head-

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[67] Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', p. 76.

[68] Tanner, Fred (2003) 'Security Governance. The difficult task of security democratization in the Mediterranean', p. 6.

[69] In other words as long as civilian and political institutions remain weak it will be very difficult to restrain let alone control the power of the military. See also Bill, James & Springborg, Robert (1994), '*Politics in the Middle East*', p. 263.

[70] As Fred Tanner argues, albeit on a more optimistic note, 'Security governance will be able to take foothold in the region once democratization and political liberalization is accepted as complement to state-making in the region. For this to happen the elites in the countries have to muster the political will for peaceful change', Tanner, Fred (2003) 'Security Governance. The difficult task of security democratization in the Mediterranean', p. 6.

ing of making the armed forces more effective and improving their interoperability with NATO forces. In contrast to the PfP Programme, the strengthened Mediterranean Dialogue will hence not entail any conditions or declarations on democratisation or good governance of the defence sector.[71]

From the perspective of the 'cooperative security' strategy, this is arguably a sensible strategy. The Mediterranean states are, as discussed above, hesitant towards changes in the political status quo. They are interested in training and courses which can help to modernize and rationalize their armed forces, but they are suspicious of reform initiatives that can be interpreted as Western attempts of intervention or imposition of cultural norms. In light of the fact that NATO possesses few 'carrots', which it can use to further such challenging reforms of civil military relations; it therefore seems more fruitful to emphasize the benefits of defence reform in the form of rationalization and professionalization of the armed forces.

However, this more modest strategy obviously creates a democratic dilemma for the Alliance. By providing assistance on how to modernize the armed forces and making these more effective, the Alliance risks to enhance the repressive capabilities and autonomous powers of the military, without increasing the military's subordination to civilian rule. As Kamrava has argued, recent military professionalization in the Middle East has not 'translated into the military's depolitization. To the contrary, it has increased the potential for the military's continued intervention in the political process.'[72] In other words, improvements in training, command structures, and military equipment may actually fortify the military's role and position in the Middle East, thereby hampering potential attempts to increase civilian or democratic control.

This well-known dilemma between concerns for democracy and human rights on one hand, and concerns for security and military cooperation on the other hand, is even more acute in relation to anti-terror cooperation. In the wake of

[71] See Tanner, Fred (2003) 'Security Governance. The difficult task of security democratization in the Mediterranean', p. 7, Neep, Daniel (2004) 'The Istanbul Initiative? Finding a real role for NATO in the Middle East and North Africa'; Donelly, Chris (2004) 'Forging a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East', p. 29; Bin, Alberto, Head of Regional Affairs, NATO HQ, Speech at the conference on "Democratisation and Security in the Middle East: Challenges and Possibilities", DIIS, Copenhagen, 6-7 December 2004.
[72] See Kamrava, Mehran (2000) 'Military professionalization and civil-military relations in the Middle East', p. 67

the terror attacks on September 11 in 2001 and the Madrid bombings in 2004, counter-terrorism has emerged as an obvious field of cooperation between the Mediterranean partner states and NATO, since both sides are believed to share a common interest and a common security threat.

What particular form such cooperation should take has not yet been worked out in detail. But NATO officials have especially pointed to the possibilities of the Dialogue states taking part in Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean, of increasing border controls, and of sharing intelligence on suspected terrorists and terrorist activities.[73] Yet, similarly to the issue of defence reform, NATO risks to legitimize – or even enhance – the repressive practices of the Mediterranean governments by working too closely together on anti-terror measures. Many of the Mediterranean states have used the 'fight again terrorism' as an excuse to back down on reform processes and to crack down fiercely on domestic opponents.[74] In Egypt, for instance, mass arrests of suspected Islamists followed in the immediate aftermath of September 11, and civil society groups, human rights activists and leftists movements have in large numbers been prosecuted for Islamist leanings or for plotting against the government.[75] Too close cooperation on countering terrorism may hence send the wrong message to the region, and may be perceived by the incumbent regimes as a carte blanche for oppressive policies, as long as they are carried out in the name of the fight against terrorism.[76]

In sum, those two areas where NATO and the Mediterranean states especially share a common interest in cooperation risk to carry significant ramifications

[73] See especially NATO Policy Document 9 July, 'A more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue'; *NATO Update 8 December 2004,* 'NATO celebrates 10th Anniversary of Mediterranean Dialogue', *NATO Update 29 June 2004,* 'NATO elevates Mediterranean Dialogue to a genuine partnership and launches Istanbul Cooperation Initiative'.

[74] See e.g. Pelham, Nicolas (2003) 'Prospects for the Twenty-First Century' in Mansfield, Peter (2003) *A History of the Middle East*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 398-400; Jünnemann, Annette (2004) 'Security Building in the Mediterranean After September 11' in Jünnemann, Annette (ed.) (2004) *Euro-Mediterranean Relations After September 11*, Frank Cass, London.

[75] Grünert, Angela (2004) 'Loss of Guiding Values and Support: September 11 and the Isolation of Human Rights Organisations in Egypt' pp. 133-152 in Jünnemann, Annette ed. (2004) *Euro-Mediterranean Relations After September 11,* p. 149. As Grünert, however, also points out the mass arrest of Islamists following September 11 were also a direct response to demands from the United States.

[76] With respect to intelligence sharing it is therefore important to keep in mind that the line between suspected terrorist and domestic opponents is very blurred in the Mediterranean states. As Nicolas Pelham for instance notes Algeria, Israel, Egypt and Libya were all too eager to provide Washington with lists of Islamic Militants who allegedly were linked to Al-Qaeda, yet most of these being engaged in local rather than global struggles. See Pelham, Nicolas (2003) *Prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 399.

for human rights and political reforms in the region. It is therefore important that NATO first clarify the extent to which security governance is to be included as an element in its assistance to the Mediterranean states on defence reform, and secondly that NATO remains acutely aware that anti-terror cooperation must be limited in scope, if it is not to shore up the repressive policies of many of the Mediterranean regimes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

NATO hopes to turn the Mediterranean Dialogue into a real partnership along the lines of the successful PfP model. For the foreseeable future this does, however, not seem realistic. The Mediterranean Dialogue can arguably be strengthened and it should be used as an important confidence building measure. But a PfP Programme for the Mediterranean states seems premature. As this report has shown, the Mediterranean states are situated in a very different security climate compared to that of the East and Central European states at the end of the Cold War. The Dialogue states do not have the same positive perception of NATO as the states of the former Eastern block, and they are not looking for greater integration with a Western security alliance. To the contrary, the Mediterranean states in general view NATO with suspicions and mistrust.

These impediments to further cooperation and exchanges are compounded by the fact that NATO possesses few carrots with which it can persuade the Mediterranean states to deepen cooperation or move forward on difficult reform processes. NATO is not a magnet in the South as it was in the East. This means that the Mediterranean Dialogue can only be strengthened to the extent that the Mediterranean states perceive the Dialogue as a beneficial process which also addresses their security concerns and needs. In essence the Dialogue can only effectively function if it is based on real co-ownership. Extensive security and defence cooperation is therefore, at best, a long-term project.

Given these strong barriers to a genuine partnership, what role can NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue then play, and in which areas can the Dialogue be strengthened? For now the real value of the Mediterranean Dialogue should be found in its ability to further confidence and trust between NATO and the Mediterranean partners by working as an effective political forum for discussions and dissemination of information on security policies and perceptions. This aspect of the Mediterranean Dialogue has sometimes been ridiculed by being linked to the idea of NATO as a club of 'No Action Talk Only'.[77] However, given the fact that the Mediterranean states in general have a negative and threat-related perception of NATO, it should remain a main

[77] See Donelly, Chris (2004) 'Forging a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East'.

goal of the Dialogue to ease out misperceptions and stereotypes on part of both NATO and the Mediterranean states.

To achieve this it could for instance be considered to apply one of the most effective PfP tools; namely the establishment of official national representations at NATO Headquarters. Such representations will – in conjunction with the many seminars that the Mediterranean states are offered through the Annual Work Programme – help to create informal networks which can smooth out tensions and misconceptions. Moreover, national representations will also give the Mediterranean states a first hand encounter of the workings and goals of NATO.[78]

These diplomatic and informational activities should also be complemented with carefully targeted practical and military activities. Some of the Mediterranean states are – as this report has pointed out – certainly interested in beefing up the military side of the Dialogue especially with respect to anti-terror cooperation and defence reform. They are interested in modern military equipment and training, and they may also be interested in ways and means of rationalizing the defence sector. Such reforms will also improve the interoperability of the Mediterranean states and enhance their capacity to work alongside NATO in peacekeeping – or anti-terror operations, such as Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean. Hence here NATO has something to offer and this can prove to be an important lever for pushing cooperation on more sensitive issues such as security governance.

Yet, NATO has a very narrow path to walk with respect to defence reform and counter-terror cooperation. As it has been outlined in some depth, the military plays a very significant role in civilian and political life in the Middle East, and it has become one of the main guarantors of the status quo in the region. Anti-terror cooperation and assistance on rationalization and modernization of the defence sector should therefore pay careful attention to the risks of enhancing the power and repressive capabilities of the military.

In sum, at present it is not realistic that the PfP process and logic can be directly transferred to the region. Yet the Mediterranean Dialogue has a role to play and it can be strengthened in limited areas, hereby contributing to minimis-

[78] Donnelly, Chris (2004) 'Forging a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East'.

ing tensions and defusing conflicts. How the Mediterranean states respond to NATO's call for a strengthened partnership will, however, ultimately depend on Western policies at large with respects to the Middle East. The situation in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and US-EU reactions towards Iran and Syria will in the end shape much of the response and interest of the Mediterranean states in cooperating with NATO.

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