

THE MEDITERRANEAN IN NATO'S STRATEGY

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Recent anti regime uprisings in North Africa have sent significant shockwaves not only through the region, but also throughout the West as these unpredicted and unprecedented events have seriously affected regional stability. This development further strengthens the point that NATO's current security framework for the region may no longer be effective in preventing new threats from emerging in the southern Mediterranean countries. Therefore, since NATO highlighted the Mediterranean Dialogue Initiative in its new Strategic Concept, adopted late in 2010, these events should drive the requirement for a review of regional security approaches. In this case, Morocco might offer a suitable case study for a long term holistic solution to prevent such events, based on its relative stability, historical ties with NATO member states as well as its role as a link between the West and the Arab World. This solution could include a multilateral effort from NATO, the European Union and North African countries aimed at human development, with diplomatic initiatives in addition to the enhancement of military capabilities.

THE MEDITERRANEAN IN NATO'S STRATEGY

Events in Egypt and North Africa serve as a timely reminder. We cannot take stability for granted, even in our immediate neighborhood.

—Anders Fogh Rasmussen
NATO Secretary General¹

In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) found itself in a geostrategic context very different from that which prompted its creation in 1949. This raised the question whether the Alliance should adapt itself to the new international environment or disband in view of the end of the Soviet Union threat. After a series of summits, NATO found a new *raison d'être*, primarily in crisis management and enlargement. After more than two decades of continued evolution, NATO articulated its aspirations to become a "global security agency" in its 2010 Strategic Concept.² During this evolution, NATO forged a global network of relationships. The most well-known, the Partnership for Peace program (PfP), was developed to bring the countries of Central and Eastern Europe closer to NATO and to prepare them for possible NATO membership.³

Having made a great effort to achieve stability in Eastern Europe through the PfP, the Alliance is now increasing its focus on the Mediterranean. NATO recognizes that the security of its members depends largely on the stability of states in North Africa and the Middle East. The Mediterranean functions as a node of communication and commerce, where Europe, Asia, and Africa join. The region also provides access to the Persian Gulf, which holds 70 percent of the global oil reserve. These factors make the security of the region a vital interest for NATO, the European Union (EU), and the global economy.

While the Mediterranean contains the same domestic and transnational security challenges that characterize much of today's world, the Mediterranean has been without a formalized security structure like the one that has made Europe so stable. The absence of such an institutional framework has denied the non-NATO, coastal countries an appropriate framework for crisis prevention and action. To bridge this gap, NATO decided to invite the states on the southern shore of the Mediterranean to open a political dialogue in 1995. This led to a program of practical cooperation in the form of an initiative called the "Mediterranean Dialogue of NATO" (MD).⁴ The MD focuses on the security and development of the countries in the Mediterranean region.

The Kingdom of Morocco joined NATO's MD at its very beginning. This decision was made not only because of the Kingdom's historical ties with key members of this organization, but also because Morocco saw the Mediterranean as a strategic area for its development, security, and integration into the global economic system. The inclusion in NATO's MD is an opportunity for the Kingdom to combine regional security with its vital interests and presents Morocco with an ideal setting for positioning itself as a key NATO partner for regional peace and security cooperation. In addition, this dialogue allows the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces (RAF) to benefit from the expertise of Alliance security's forces.

NATO's adoption of a new Strategic Concept in 2010 and the political unrest in North Africa and the Middle East suggests a greater role for the MD in NATO's overall strategy. Given the common challenges and the new geopolitical situation in the Maghreb, it also raises the question of Morocco's role in its relationship to NATO.

Morocco is in a unique position for cooperation, given the Kingdom's historically close ties to the West and its prominent and very active role within the MD to date.

To answer this question, it is first necessary to recap NATO's evolution since the end of the Cold War in order to better understand the role of the Mediterranean region in its new strategic concept. This paper will then analyze the content of the MD with regard to NATO's strategic interests in this region. Finally, this paper will focus on the relationship between NATO and Morocco and how this dialogue can enhance the relevance and security of NATO and its partners.

NATO's Evolution in the Strategic Context of the Post-Cold War

After providing the Euro-Atlantic region a high level of stability and contributing to ending the Cold War, NATO encountered a new world after 1989. This world was characterized by a geo-strategic context different from that which had prompted NATO's creation.⁵ Initially created to protect its member states against Communist expansion, NATO began a new phase in its history after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw Pact disintegration initiated the debate on the justification for NATO in the post Cold War world.

Meeting July 6, 1990 in London, the NATO heads of state expressed their readiness to adapt NATO to the new security environment. "Today, our Alliance begins a major transformation. Working with all the countries of Europe, we are determined to create enduring peace on this continent."⁶ Looking for a new *raison d'être*, NATO thus changed its approach to include crisis management.

The option of adapting NATO was clearly outlined in London in 1990 and its future was clarified successively at the Rome Summit (1991), Brussels (1994), and Madrid (1997).⁷ The Washington Summit held in April 1999 to mark the 50th

anniversary of NATO, adopted a new strategic concept, aiming to make the Alliance larger, more efficient, flexible, committed to collective defense, and able to undertake new missions. This includes contributing to effective conflict prevention and engaging actively in crisis management.⁸ This approach built on earlier efforts in 1991 to revise NATO's approach to security through crisis management.

Crisis Management: NATO's New Role. The 1991 Strategic Concept established the prevention, management and resolution of crises as part of NATO's new strategy. NATO restructured and adapted its forces to enable them to perform these new missions. This was followed by a double intervention in the Balkans where NATO played a decisive role. The disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s resulted in prolonged and bloody conflicts directly affecting NATO interests. The UN transferred responsibility for operations in the Balkans to NATO and tasked it to implement the military aspects of the peace agreement.⁹ In December 1995, NATO established the International Implementation Force (IFOR) and assumed responsibilities for the implementation of the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In December 1996, IFOR was succeeded by the Stabilization Force (SFOR) through which NATO continued its mission until transferring it to the European Union in 2004.¹⁰ Both IFOR and SFOR demonstrated NATO's new crisis management capability.

In Kosovo, NATO adapted its approach to crisis management. In this case, NATO did not request the United Nations Security Council mandate because of the possibility of a Russian or Chinese veto. NATO's air attacks on Serbia, which commenced in March 24, 1999, eventually forced the Serbian government to negotiate. The Rambouillet Agreement signed on June 8, 1999, ended NATO's air campaign. The

UN Security Council voted to establish a peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR) under NATO operational command.¹¹ This successful operation validated NATO's new role in crisis management.

The Alliance after 9-11 and the War against Terrorism. A further development came with NATO's response to the 9-11 attacks. For the first time in its history, NATO invoked the Article 5 clause (collective defense) of the Washington Treaty.¹² The former U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns, articulated the rationale behind this decision. "This new threat (terrorism) poses the gravest dangers to the security of the US and its allies and friends."¹³ Following 9-11, NATO adopted a number of policy initiatives including diplomatic and military responses to the terrorist threat. NATO also strengthened its defense capabilities through a reform of the command structure and the creation of the NATO Response Force (NRF). These reforms helped prepare NATO to emerge from its traditional European theater of operations to its current worldwide missions.

After the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom, the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) was created under UN Security Council Resolution 1386, 1413, and 1444. NATO took command of ISAF in August 2003 and gradually began to expand its role in Afghanistan. The Secretary General of NATO, Lord George Robertson, justified NATO's role in ISAF, "NATO is always ready to deal with threats against the member states of NATO."¹⁴ Many considered ISAF a critical test for the Alliance. "This operation is a historic milestone not only because it takes place beyond European borders, but also because it represents a crucial test of the ability of NATO as a provider of security in areas of the most dangerous instability."¹⁵

NATO's determination to act globally was further manifested when NATO deployed its response force to Pakistan to provide humanitarian relief in 2005, and in Darfur, Africa in 2006. This global focus was seen as necessary for the Alliance to meet the security challenges of the contemporary world. The adoption of the new Strategic Concept formally articulated this ambition.¹⁶

NATO's New Strategic Concept 2010. While the NATO approach has changed, the new Strategic Concept shows the objective of NATO members remains the same. NATO aspires "to play its unique and essential role in ensuring (its) common defense and security."¹⁷ However, NATO has deviated far from the original focus on Europe. It has realized that the threats it faces are more diverse, ambiguous, and geographically distant than during the Cold War period. NATO intends to act with new capabilities and new partners to meet these challenges.

The globalization of security objectives does not appear explicitly in official documents arising from the Lisbon Summit. This globalization is manifest through three approaches: new missions, new members, and new partnerships. The first approach represents a functional expansion, with the addition of new missions such as conflict prevention, stability and security operations, and combating terrorism. NATO also aspires to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. Addressing key environmental and resource issues, including health risks, climate change, and water scarcity also constitute new tasks for the Alliance.¹⁸

Second, NATO began to globalize its role through the extension of its area of responsibility. The new Strategic Concept has opened the doors of NATO to European democracies willing to assume the membership responsibilities and obligations. In

addition, it emphasizes the importance of cooperation between NATO and the UN “to make a substantial contribution to security in operations around the world.”¹⁹

Third, in order to expand NATO’s influence, the new Strategic Concept has underlined the need for strengthening and expanding partnerships with countries and organizations around the globe. NATO took the historic step of redefining the relationship with Russia in the hopes of creating “a fresh start in relations.”²⁰ Finally, the Strategic Concept considers dialogue and cooperation, especially with other European, Mediterranean and Gulf nations, as a “concrete contribution to enhancing international security.”²¹

NATO’s Globalization Challenges. There are three important issues NATO will have to confront to realize its global reach. The first one is its readiness to reform the Alliance and its institutions in order to become more flexible and agile for the world as it is today. The second is to convince all member nations to support new initiatives, such as the territorial missile-defense system.²² The third challenge is for NATO to achieve its objective in Afghanistan. The credibility of the Alliance depends on its ability to enable the Afghan government to provide security throughout the country by the end of 2014 and to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for Al Qaeda.²³ NATO’s success in Afghanistan would demonstrate to the population of the member states the capability of the Alliance to play a global role.

Risks to NATO’s Globalization Project. However, there are four risks of this globalization which have to be overcome. First, NATO seems far from being united around the internationalization of its activities. Although consensus exists among its members about the need for reform, transatlantic relations suffer from persistent

differences between the U.S. and many European countries. These differences concern the interpretation of Article 5, especially when NATO is planning actions out of its area of responsibility. European countries are cautious about “non-Article 5” missions outside of the alliance, due to the fact that they are not a response to a direct attack on any NATO member.

Second, the globalization of NATO faces the challenge of mobilizing adequate military capabilities, especially human resources, to meet the demands of the operations. With a "Global NATO", the Alliance will continue to have growing requirements, which member states cannot, or will not easily satisfy. Today with more than two millions soldiers under NATO member states control, it's surprisingly hard to mobilize even 50,000 soldiers to support operations. Forces that deploy, do so with national caveats that limit their operational capability and flexibility.

Third, the Alliance's funding processes are also an impediment to the achievement of NATO's global mission. The organization applies the principle of charging expenses to the provider. Countries that provide forces are expected to pay their own way. The Alliance does not normally use common funding for these costs. When it comes to military expenses, it has become increasingly hard, especially for the European countries, to convince their populations to make further budgetary efforts.²⁴ Many member states have made deep defense budget cuts due to financial and social crises. In addition, some countries, like Greece and Spain, carry heavy external debt loads.

Finally, the globalization of NATO risks disturbing the coherence of the international security system, especially in dealing with the United Nations (UN). This

globalization implicitly challenges the UN Charter which affirms the primary responsibility of the Security Council (UN/SC) for the maintenance of international peace and security. Although NATO's new Strategic Concept affirms its commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN, some NATO nations are not as supportive of NATO as a global player. Out of area operations undertaken without a UN mandate, as in the case of the Kosovo campaign in 1999, challenge the legitimacy of the Alliance. Some members of the International Community perceive such actions as an illegal approach to outplay the balance ensured by UN/SC permanent members. This approach may also threaten some of the different partnerships NATO has developed since the early 1990s. This is especially true with regard to the countries which take part in the MD.

The Place of the Mediterranean Region in NATO's Strategy

Relations between NATO and the Mediterranean southern states are relatively new in terms of Alliance history. It was not until 1994 that NATO began to pay special attention to its relations with Mediterranean countries. As NATO Secretary General for Political Affairs, Mr. Sergio Balanzino, stated, "... the early 1990s saw a rise in Islamic fundamentalist violence in Algeria, ... and an increasing proliferation of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, which gave cause for alarm both in the southern Mediterranean as well as in Europe."²⁵ The establishment of the MD recognized that promoting stability in that region was a vital interest for the security of NATO member states.

The Mediterranean Region in the NATO's Perception of Security. The Mediterranean region remains important to NATO and its southern states due to its geographic proximity. This closeness links the security and stability of the two regions

and makes the region strategically important. The Mediterranean Sea is not only a space of international trade flow but also a buffer that serves to protect Europe as a "Rimland."²⁶ These factors have created a sense of interdependence, requiring both dialogue and practical cooperation.²⁷

This proximity to the Mediterranean poses a potential security risk to NATO members. The rise of extremism, terrorism, Islamism, drugs, immigration, population growth, and poverty in the southern Mediterranean poses a significant challenge to NATO states.²⁸ Former Deputy Secretary General; Alessandro Minuto Rizzo placed the potential threat from this region (Maghreb and Middle East) at the forefront of threats facing the Alliance.²⁹ Therefore, in NATO's new Security Concept, the Mediterranean is seen as a theater of preventive actions and potential cooperation.

NATO has been involved in the Mediterranean region since early in the Cold War. NATO maintained a strong interest in the Mediterranean region, due to the potential threat of a military invasion by Warsaw Pact forces. The Mediterranean region was thus described as the "southern flank" of NATO. As such, it was one of the most important theaters of the US-Soviet Cold War. Consequently, NATO maintained significant land, air, and sea forces in the region.

The same was true after the fall of the Soviet Union. As defined in NATO's 1991 Strategic Concept, "the stability and peace of the countries on the southern periphery of Europe are important for the security of the Alliance, as the 1991 Gulf War has shown."³⁰ This focus on stability represented a change in the traditional perceptions of NATO towards the region. NATO's sought to ensure stability in the Mediterranean through two approaches: presence and cooperation.

Firstly, the protection of Mediterranean communications routes for NATO supplies requires a permanent presence of naval forces. This presence provides both a warning capability for crisis situations and the resources for adequate response to these potential crises. For example, in order to fight terrorism in the Mediterranean, NATO has committed naval forces under “Operation Active Endeavour” since October 2001. This operation aims to identify, locate, and counter terrorist risks in the Mediterranean Sea by collecting and analyzing information related to maritime transport in order to better target suspicious vessels.³¹

Second, in order to stabilize the Mediterranean environment through cooperation, NATO naval forces have adopted a new doctrine called "Sea Power for Peace." This program includes exercises and operations to promote interoperability and cooperation among Mediterranean southern nations.³² These missions include many maritime activities such as emergency and rescue operations, as well as preventing and combating illegal activities at sea to include terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking, and illegal migration. These challenges have led NATO to pursue extensive cooperation with Mediterranean countries through the MD.

The Purpose of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. NATO initiated its MD at the Heads of States and Governments meeting in Brussels in January 1994. Then, during its permanent session of February 8, 1995, the North Atlantic Council invited Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia to attend the preliminary phase of the MD. Jordan and Algeria joined the Dialogue, respectively, in November 1995 and October 2000.³³

Since 9-11, NATO has consistently stressed the importance and attention it gives to this Dialogue. At the Prague Summit in November 2002, NATO decided to enhance the political and practical dimensions of the MD as an integral part of the Alliance's cooperative approach to security.³⁴ At the Istanbul Summit in June 2004, Dialogue members were elevated to Partnership status, drawing on the concept from "Partnership for Peace," but without the institutional framework.³⁵ This approach gave the Alliance and Dialogue member's maximum flexibility to pursue cooperation. The Alliance's new Strategic Concept asserts its firm commitment "to the development of friendly and cooperative relations with all countries of the Mediterranean, and intends to further develop the MD in the coming years."³⁶ Through its offer of dialogue, NATO aims "to contribute to regional security and stability, to achieve better mutual understanding, and to dispel any misconceptions about NATO among Dialogue countries."³⁷ In addition to strengthening the dialogue with Mediterranean countries, NATO aims to offer a joint crisis management mechanism to maintain stability and increase the non-proliferation effort.³⁸

To meet these objectives, the Dialogue is based on a specific set of principles and instruments of cooperation. Introducing the MD to a group of Moroccan journalists on a visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels in early June 2007, Ambassador Alessandro Rizzo stated that "there is no treaty or other written obligation. It is a simple cooperation, very practical and not very institutionalized to avoid administrative procedures and allow a greater flexibility."³⁹ In other words, it's an adaptable Dialogue in which each country is free to participate at their own level, on the basis of key

principles such as progression, non-discrimination, co-responsibility, self-financing, complements, and expansion.⁴⁰

The MD is based on a bilateral structure that allows each partner to cooperate individually with NATO as a sovereign state in order to examine special needs and consequently maximize collaboration. In actuality, the MD uses the formula of 28+1, meaning bilateral cooperation between NATO's 28 member states and each individual country from the MD separately. Political dialogue and practical cooperation represent the main instruments of the MD.

The political dialogue depends on rules and ad-hoc structures of control to achieve its objectives. This approach relies on regular bilateral discussions and presentations on the comprehensive activities of the Alliance. It also includes specific programs and partnerships in the framework of the overall policy of NATO cooperation. The Alliance seeks to establish a tradition of discussion and concrete practices as well as to engage in dialogue with Arab countries.⁴¹ The objective is to dispel misunderstandings and to eliminate prejudice leveled against NATO. In fact this is one of the few forums in which Arab countries meet with Israel. In 2004 the cooperation was expanded further when the Istanbul Summit paved the way for higher political level meetings. This expansion resulted in:

- The first meeting of the North Atlantic Council held in a Mediterranean partner country. (Morocco, 6-7 April 2006).⁴²
- The first meeting of Defense Ministers in 26+7 format; multilateral consultation between NATO's 26 member states and 7 members of the MD, (Taormina Italy, 10 February, 2006).

- The designation of diplomats and liaisons from MD nations with the permanent headquarters of NATO.
- The creation of the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG), which was given overall responsibility for the MD.
- The creation of the Mediterranean Special Group (GSM) of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO in 1996 with the objective of "restructuring the Mediterranean activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO."⁴³

In addition to the political dialogue, the NATO Mediterranean initiative includes practical cooperation. The Istanbul Summit extended a range of military activities under the PfP program to the southern countries. The agreed priority areas included activities ranging from simple military contacts to joint exercises in crisis management. They also included information exchanges on fighting terrorism as well as access to the training programs provided by the Alliance schools.⁴⁴ Given these principles and instruments, the MD now offers the Allies and their partners the opportunity to better understand and cooperate with each other.

The Limits of the MD. However, there are significant limits to this Dialogue as currently configured. First and foremost, the aspirations for the MD are not uniform within the Alliance. NATO members have different strategic priorities according to their geographic position as well as their individual security concerns. Profound disagreements exist between European countries with a coastline on the Mediterranean and those located in Central Europe, like Germany and Poland. It should also be noted that all members of the Alliance are not ready to devote additional financial resources to the South.⁴⁵

Secondly, the perceptions of the purpose of the MD differ between NATO and non-NATO members. Within the Alliance, the Dialogue is seen as a program to improve confidence and contain threats. Conversely, the non-NATO members feel the Dialogue should also address South-South issues. They would therefore prefer a more balanced vision of Mediterranean security. These states would also like to include humanitarian concerns and economic development in the areas of cooperation with NATO. This soft security is important to the MD, rather than focusing only on the traditional aspects of security.⁴⁶

However, obstacles to strong cooperation do not come only from the northern part of the Mediterranean. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to poison relations among Mediterranean states. This issue multiplies the misconceptions and misunderstandings between both the North and South and blocks the full development of a confident dialogue. As long as it endures, this conflict will continue to affect the collective perception of the Arab world about the West and NATO.

Similarly, the persistence of regional disputes represents a continued security threat in the Mediterranean. These disputes include the question of the Saharan provinces of Morocco, the demarcation of the border between Morocco and Algeria, and even the involvement of Al Qaida in the Sahel, which could affect the entire region's stability.⁴⁷ It is in the interest of the North African countries to adopt a clear strategy with regard to the aspirations of its peoples, and the diversity of its resources. However, it is politically difficult to do so due to the historical and persistent bilateral conflicts in this region. Cooperation with NATO could help as the Alliance has had some success in resolving similar issues in the context of the PfP program.

There are also opportunities for MD countries to help NATO improve its image by leveraging new media. The growing importance and effect of the media on public opinion in the Arab world cannot be denied, especially in the Maghreb. The emergence of independent media at the national and the regional levels has contributed to the emergence of an Arab public space that transcends borders. Satellite news channels such as "Aljazeera" or "Al Arabia" have become formidable opinion makers, as seen recently in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Currently, the Arab public perceives the Alliance as "the armed wing of American policy in the Mediterranean."⁴⁸ Finding a way to leverage the media may allow more western-oriented North African countries to act as a bridge between the Mediterranean South and North, especially NATO. As a bridge between the West and Arab World, Morocco could play an important role in changing this impression due to its historical Atlantic relations and its strategic position in the Maghreb.

Morocco and NATO Relations

Throughout history, the great powers have always been interested in Morocco due to its geostrategic position. During the nineteenth century, France, Spain, and England struggled to control the Moroccan littorals in order to dominate navigation in the Mediterranean Sea. With American involvement in World War II, the US realized Morocco's importance to the security of Europe and the US due to the country's geostrategic position as a protective belt. The purpose of American policy in the region evolved to provide the US with a base from which it could project its power while denying Morocco as a base for the Axis Powers.⁴⁹

The landing of US forces in Morocco in 1942 marked the beginning of contemporary cooperation between Morocco and the Western countries which founded

NATO. From the American perspective, North Africa provided the “setting for Act One in America’s new role as a world power with global interests and responsibilities. There, the American military forces received their baptism of fire.”⁵⁰

On December 22, 1950 France and the US signed a secret agreement allowing the Americans to build new bases in Morocco.⁵¹ Thus when Morocco gained its independence 1956, there were already American bases on its territory. However, the status of these bases was determined by an agreement approved by the colonial government. Seeking to reconcile the existence of these bases with the requirements of its independence, Morocco demanded the opening of negotiations with the US. Initially, Morocco was ready to cooperate with the US. His Majesty King Mohammed V, referring to Morocco’s part in World War II and implying at the same time that his attitude on Communism was the same as that of the U.S, stated: “We are friends, former comrades at arms and united by the same principles”.⁵²

The American bases remained strategically vital to NATO. To abandon them could potentially allow the Communist Bloc to establish a foothold in the Atlantic. Initially, the U.S. rejected Moroccan demands to negotiate the bases’ status. Cavendish Cannon, the first American ambassador to independent Morocco, said to the national press that the bases were installations under French command, and that their status should be negotiated within the framework of Franco-Moroccan discussions. This claim led all Moroccan political entities to demand the departure of US forces on the basis that there was no legal ground for retaining US troops on Moroccan soil.⁵³

As a result of this demand, the US decided to change its position. When President Eisenhower visited Morocco in 1959, he accepted that the American forces

should leave the bases before the end of 1963.⁵⁴ However, the requirements of US strategy, including the need to ensure effective logistics support to American naval forces navigating the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, underlined the continued relevance US presence in Morocco.

The Moroccan government continued to accept an American military presence until July 1978. By this concession, Morocco de facto recognized its real interests were aligned with the West.⁵⁵ In exchange for this concession, the US provided military training assistance, especially within the field of telecommunications, air trafficking, and air combat. Similarly, the US provided Morocco with one of the most extensive military and financial aid programs of that time.⁵⁶ This aid was specifically targeted at improving the capacity of the Moroccan Air Forces.⁵⁷ Thus the aid to Morocco was used not only to bolster Morocco, but also to rebalance the power in the region.

Morocco's Role in the Mediterranean Region. This regional role for Morocco has been articulated in the speeches and statements of various kings who ruled the Kingdom after it gained independence. In accordance with the domestic interpretation of the Constitution, these speeches have constituted the Moroccan doctrine. The Kingdom policies have been consistent over the last 50 years in defining the national role of Morocco as a bridge between the West and the Arab-Islamic world as well as a mediator and promoter of peace on the international scene.

In the immediate aftermath of independence, King Mohammed V insisted on maintaining and developing the historical role of Morocco as a link between East and West.⁵⁸ "In foreign affairs, we are firmly determined to establish a policy that allows our country to play its historic role as a bridge between East and West ... We are also

strengthening our ties with ... countries of the Arab League and those of Afro-Asian.”⁵⁹

The enthronement of King Hassan II in 1961 did not change this aspect of foreign policy. Rather, the new Sovereign confirmed this policy by using the metaphor of Morocco as a "bridge" in one of his first speeches. "We want to be a bridge between East and West, between Africa and other continents.”⁶⁰ This bridging became evident especially within the Arab and Islamic summits. More than half of these meetings took place in Morocco where Moroccan diplomacy played an active role in mediating during numerous regional crises.

The regional diplomatic actions were complemented by Morocco's role as mediator and promoter of peace. Morocco participated in various peacekeeping operations within as well as outside the Mediterranean region. During the Cold War, crisis mediation was often informal and characterized by confidentiality as exemplified by Moroccan mediation in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, this mediation is official and more open.

Morocco and the MD. The relationship between the West and Morocco was further strengthened with the start of the MD in 1995. Through this dialogue, Morocco has had the opportunity to express its views and expectations on Mediterranean security, to develop politico-strategic cooperation with NATO, and to participate actively in this initiative primarily through a significant contribution to crisis management in the Mediterranean.⁶¹ The political cooperation was strengthened further in 2005 when Morocco signed a security agreement with NATO, regulating the exchange of sensitive information. Additionally, Morocco participated in several joint meetings within the framework of NATO, at the Foreign and Defense Ministers levels as well as at the Chief

of Defense Staff level. In the fight against terrorism, Moroccan officials and representatives from NATO conducted an exchange of letters in June 2008, formalizing the Moroccan contribution to operation "Active Endeavour."⁶² This active participation contributes to the protection of Moroccan vital interests in the Mediterranean: the preservation of the international image of the Kingdom, the free flow of commerce and regional stability.

Morocco's Interests in the MD. A key impact of Morocco's MD participation is that it has reinforced Morocco's international image. King Hassan II emphasized this aspiration in his speech from the throne on March 3, 1995. "Our policy has helped to shape ... the image of a country moderate, committed to peace ... it [Morocco] soon became the ideal place ... where the main lines of international politics decisions are most often drawn."⁶³

Second, the MD has been vital for Morocco to secure its foreign trade which is mainly sea-based. In his book "The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783," Admiral Alfred Mahan emphasized the importance of mastering the sea, when it comes to the political evolution of nations and their economic prosperity⁶⁴. These considerations are especially applicable to Morocco, which has a coastline that measures more than 2175 miles overlooking both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean.⁶⁵ Economically, Morocco is an island in the sense that the Kingdom is largely dependent on maritime traffic which provides 95 percent of its foreign trade.⁶⁶ It therefore is vital for Morocco to secure its maritime space against terrorism, illegal immigration, and other illicit trafficking. Morocco has sought to achieve these goals by close cooperation within NATO's MD.

In addition, the Strait of Gibraltar, in which more than 90,000 ships transit a year, constitutes a major geostrategic factor.⁶⁷ Since emerging threats have the potential to affect the security of the sea lines of communication (SLOC) from both sides of the strait, effective security can only be achieved through international cooperation. This was confirmed in NATO's new Strategic Concept, which explicitly put safety of SLOCs on the list of global challenges.

Finally, regional stability remains at the heart of Moroccan security policy. The protection of the territory, people and property against subversion is achieved not only by security measures, but also through economic development and education aimed at the root causes of terrorism and instability.⁶⁸ Within the MD framework, Morocco has shown its willingness to support the fight against all forms of terrorism. However, such support calls for the application of good judgment and the distinction between terrorism and Islam. Islam is a religion of peace and coexistence that rejects violence and killing.⁶⁹ According to NATO Deputy Secretary General Claudio Bisogniero, Morocco plays a "prominent role" in the framework of NATO's MD.⁷⁰ This role has allowed Morocco to strengthen its geopolitical influence as a privileged interlocutor in the fight against terrorism and the protection from weapons of mass destruction.

Morocco's Contribution to the MD. Morocco's military cooperation with NATO has grown rapidly over the last fifteen years. This activity has included participation in operational exercises, training within NATO schools and contributions to crisis management operations. In fact, Morocco contributed heavily to NATO's efforts for the restoration of peace in the Balkans, with both diplomatic and military efforts.⁷¹ When holding the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) presidency, Morocco contributed

to a dialogue with all parties concerning the pursuit of a peaceful solution in the Balkans. His Majesty King Hassan II stated as much on March 1996. “Within the framework of its responsibilities as the head of the Islamic contact group, Morocco ensured the support and implementation of all measures leading to the Dayton Agreement.”⁷² In this context, Morocco decided to participate in multinational forces responsible for ensuring the implementation of this agreement, with regard to the Islamic and international Moroccan obligations.

The military effort of the RAF in the Balkans was characterized by two dimensions: security contributions and humanitarian assistance. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Moroccan military contingent was employed as part of the international coalition for the stabilization of the region.⁷³ Moroccan contributions to the NATO efforts in Kosovo were primarily humanitarian in nature.⁷⁴ Participation in the Balkans improved Morocco’s standing on the international diplomatic scene, and increased the professionalism and interoperability of the RAF.

This participation also provided invaluable experience in operating in a multinational environment. As a whole, these commitments reflected the ambition of the Kingdom to play an active role on the international scene. They also demonstrated Morocco’s position as a regional hub and a factor of stability and peace in region. These contributions strengthened NATO’s perception of Morocco as a reliable strategic partner and brought the dialogue between Morocco and NATO to a new level.

Morocco has since participated in several activities in the areas of political consultation, diplomacy, joint exercises and maneuvers. One indication of the closer cooperation was NATO’s decision in 1997 to allow the countries associated to the MD

to join NATO schools.⁷⁵ Another indication was NATO's decision to host the first meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) with the MD outside NATO's area of responsibility in Rabat in April 2006.⁷⁶ The final confirmation came with the 2010 adoption of a new NATO Strategic Concept which highlighted the importance of the Mediterranean partnership.

The future of this cooperation relies on a mutual effort. NATO's new Strategic Concept is in line with Morocco's efforts to reconcile the imperative of defending its interests with its policy of regional and international cooperation. Specifically, Morocco aims to actively pursue an expanded cooperation with NATO based on mutual respect and respective interests. NATO's initiative of a dialogue in the Mediterranean has undoubtedly helped to establish a certain level of trust among all parties, but it also requires the development of a common concept of regional security. It requires the establishment of a real strategic partnership. This partnership must take into consideration the new challenges mentioned by the NATO's new Strategic Concept and the requirements of Morocco's sovereignty. Consequently, Morocco and NATO should base their strategic approach on a holistic, long-term policy including diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and social reforms. Due to its broad scope, this strategic approach would have to include the European Union.

Recommendations

NATO and European Union members should enhance their diplomatic efforts in order to discourage conflict. This should be done primarily through preventive diplomacy and political and economic cooperation with countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. NATO and MD countries should establish a common approach to the conflicts in the region. For example, the conflict in the Moroccan Sahara remains one of

the major obstacles to cooperation between Morocco and Algeria. This conflict not only fuels insecurity, but also hinders interstate trade. NATO members' diplomatic efforts could resolve this conflict and consequently benefit the entire region by increasing trade and economic development. This could be done without compromising single state economies, as their productions are generally diverse.⁷⁷ Currently, interstate commerce in North Africa only represents 1.3 percent of their foreign trade, which is the lowest regional rate in the world.⁷⁸

Second, Morocco should continue to pay special attention to social and economic development since the people remain the true center of gravity in any stable society. The recent events in Tunisia and Egypt which resulted in internal uprising and subsequent regime change have confirmed the importance of focusing on the human dimension. In order to ensure stability and development, it is essential for Morocco and NATO to adopt a long term multidimensional approach in all geographic areas favorable for the development of terrorism. One such approach would be the continuation of the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD). This initiative has reduced the freedom of action of terrorist networks, primarily by creating local economic growth through infrastructure improvement and financial support.⁷⁹ All together, these initiatives may explain why Morocco has seen a decrease in terrorism and remains unthreatened by social revolution, at least in the short term.⁸⁰

In order to reduce the risk of instability and resurgence of terrorism, NATO and European Union support to Morocco is necessary. This support could take several different forms, such as security force capacity building, economic development and assistance, and support for democratization efforts. It is necessary to use broad

spectral development to combat poverty, unemployment, exclusion, oppression and marginalization that remain the root causes of human frustration. The Secretary General of the Arab League at the January 2011 summit in Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt), in reaction to the revolution in Tunisia commented “The Arab soul is broken by poverty, unemployment and general recession.”⁸¹

Third, the RAF should actively pursue its reorganization around highly trained flexible, light and well equipped units. The RAF should continue to enhance its capability to operate internationally, to combat terrorism and to protect Morocco’s border from such threats as illegal trafficking. Conventional hierarchical structures have proved inefficient against the new transnational challenges. It is equally important to foster cooperation between NATO and the RAF in order to cope with the new global challenges, especially in the fields of cyberspace, disaster relief, and information sharing. Specifically, the availability of timely, correct, and valuable intelligence remains a precondition for combating terrorism and other transnational threats. This effort requires a level of coordination that can only be achieved by close cooperation with NATO member states at all levels.

In conclusion, it is difficult to predict the evolution of events in the Mediterranean region in the near future. It is equally difficult to prevent the region from destabilizing without a concerted international effort. However, efforts to stabilize the region can succeed if strong and deep cooperation between the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean is fostered. This cooperation should be based on mutual trust at the highest levels and should be focused on human development. These efforts should be supported by interoperable security forces that are equipped and structured to counter

transnational threats. In this context, adequate solutions must be found not only within the military field, but also among civilian populations, especially the most desperate and oppressed. Recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, and especially Libya have shown how these shortcomings can lead to instability. Only through justice, equity and development both locally and internationally with NATO and EU partners can all parties in the MD achieve their objectives in line with NATO's new Strategic Concept.

In this context, Morocco's cooperation with NATO can serve as an example for the entire region. The Kingdom's internal efforts to prevent instability through local development, the restructuring and international focus of the Moroccan armed forces, and the diplomatic bridging between the West, Arabic, Muslim, and African countries are all steps in the right direction. Fulfilling this role, Morocco will remain an important strategic partner for NATO and the EU in the Mediterranean region. This mutually beneficial role can be developed further with increased NATO and European Union support. This support, combined with the efforts and will of the North African countries, is essential to the peaceful development and stability of the entire region.

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