



THESSISMUN 2007

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

NATO North Atlantic Council Topic Area A

The NATO enlargement in the future: Evaluation of the process and rising institutional issues. Prospects of the NATO-Mediterranean dialogue.



UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA
THESSALONIKI, GREECE

WWW.UOM.GR/MUN - WWW.THESSISMUN.ORG



According to article 10 of the Washington Treaty, NATO members are free to invite “any European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area” to become a member. After the latest round of the enlargement, which saw Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia become members of the Alliance, NATO has grown from the 12 founding members to 26.

Each of the 5 rounds of enlargement aimed to extend Euro-Atlantic security and to strengthen the cohesion and the capabilities of the Alliance. Greece and Turkey were admitted in 1952, opening the enlargement process. In 1955, ten years after the end of World War 2, the Federal Republic of Germany was admitted to NATO, allowing the country to rehabilitate into Western structures and prepared the way for the unification. Spain was the next country to join, in 1982, after a period of political turmoil and a tough struggle among the political and military elites. That’s why Spain preferred the French model, being a member of the political structure of NATO, but remained outside of the joined military structures until 1998. The fourth round of the process was one of the most important steps towards the overcoming of the divisions imposed on the European continent by the geopolitical needs of the Cold War. During the Madrid summit in 1997 the North Atlantic Council invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to commence accession negotiations in order to become the first ex-socialist countries to join western institutions.

This decision though, was neither easy, nor self-evident. The required unanimity among all existing members was not something that could be easily overcome. There were a great number of factors that had to be taken under consideration. The main concern was the preservation of the Alliance’s ability to take decisions based on consensus and to ensure that the enlargement would strengthen European security.

The key issue about the first post-Cold War enlargement was how to alter Russia’s view of the Alliance as an anti-Russian military and political block. Russia can play an extremely important role in stabilizing the European political scene and enhance security in the entire continent. Therefore, NATO needed to address the political and strategic concerns of Russia with respect to the enlargement process. Prior to the invitations issued at the Madrid Summit, NATO



institutionalize its dialogue with Russia through the 1997 Founding Act and committed not to deploy nuclear weapons or station foreign troops on the territory of the new members.

The second issue at hand was to determine the true importance of the enlargement towards the eastern part of Europe and to outline the consequences for both the Alliance and the candidate member states. So in 1995, NATO's specialized personnel, both military and civilian, undertook a study that examined the "why and how" of future admissions into the Alliance.

The Study of NATO enlargement concluded that the end of the Cold War created the need, and at the same time the opportunity, to create a secure environment in the Euro-Atlantic region without the ideological and strategic divisions of the recent past. It also inferred that the accession of Eastern European countries in NATO would enhance stability and security in the entire continent by supporting democratic reforms, including the establishment of civilian control over the military forces; introducing patterns of cooperation, consultation and the consensus building characteristic of relations among members of the Alliance; and promoting good neighborly relations. It would also mean an increased transparency in defence planning, reinforcing therefore confidence among states, and finally would facilitate further the road towards European integration. The Study also suggested that enlargement would assist the growth of the Alliance's ability to contribute to European and international security and broaden the transatlantic relationship.

The Study also addressed the how of the undertaking, reaffirming that all extensions of the membership would be through accession of new member states to the Washington Treaty in accordance with article 10. At the time new members join NATO, they will need to accept and act accordingly to the principles, policies and procedures which have already been adopted by all the members. Other conditions were also set, including the need for candidate countries to settle ethnic disputes or territorial disputes by peaceful means before they could be accepted. Another factor would be the ability of a candidate state to contribute to collective defence, peacekeeping and other military and civilian activities of the Alliance. Ultimately, the Study concluded, Allies would decide by consensus whether to invite a new member to join, basing their judgment upon whether the membership of a specific country would contribute to security and stability in the North Atlantic area.



Based on the Study on NATO enlargement and following intense individual dialogue with interested countries and extensive consultation among Allies, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were invited to start negotiations in 1997 and formally became NATO members in 12 March 1999. Several countries willing to join were not included in the first post-Cold War round of enlargement, but NATO emphasized that the Alliance would remain open to other countries wishing to join in the future. At the Washington summit in 1999, the Allies launched a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to assist candidate countries. Seven of the MAP's original participants-Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia-were invited to begin accession negotiations during the Prague Summit in 2002.

The Membership Action Plan is a programme of advice, assistance and practical support suitable for each candidate country's individual needs. The process was created based on the experience of the accession talks of the first post-Cold War round in 1999. The MAP's main characteristics are the submission by aspiring members of individual annual national programmes on their preparations for full membership, covering political, economic, defence, resource, security and legal aspects; a candid feedback mechanism on aspirant countries' progress on their programmes that includes both political and technical advice, as well as annual meetings between all NATO members and individual candidates at the level of the North Atlantic Council to assess progress: and a defence planning approach for aspirants which includes elaboration and review of agreed planning targets. Though MAP participation helps prepare candidates for future membership, it does not provide a guarantee of future membership.

Thus, after extensive consultations with the seven countries, the Allies signed accession protocols for the seven invitees in March 2003. Once these protocols had been ratified in all member countries according to their respective national and parliamentary procedures, the seven new member states were able to accede to NATO's founding treaty on 29 March 2004. NATO is maintaining its open-door policy beyond this second post-Cold War enlargement round. It has encouraged the three other countries participating in the MAP-Albania, Croatia and the FYROM - to continue to pursue their reforms. In the case of Croatia, full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal will also be of key importance.



In practice, there is a specific process each candidate country has to follow. Countries seeking membership have to be able to demonstrate that they are in a position to further the principles of the 1949 Washington Treaty and contribute to security in the region. In addition, they are expected to meet certain political and military standards, which were laid out in the Study on NATO enlargement. They have to prove that: they represent a functioning liberal democracy based on free market economy, they treat minorities in accordance with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), they have resolved peacefully disputes with neighbours, they have the ability and willingness to make military contributions to the Alliance and they are committed to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.

Once they are invited to begin accession negotiations, the major steps in the process are:

- 1) **Accession talks with a NATO team:** These talks bring together teams of experts from both NATO and invitees. Their aim is to confirm the willingness and ability to meet the political, legal and military obligations of NATO membership of the candidate states.
- 2) **Invitees send letters of intent to NATO, along with time tables for completion of reforms:** In the second stage of the process, each invitee country provides confirmation of its acceptance of the commitments of membership in the form of a letter of intent from each foreign minister addressed to the NATO Secretary General. Together with this letter they also formally submit their individual timetables.
- 3) **Accession protocols are signed by NATO countries:** NATO then prepares Accession Protocols to the Washington Treaty for each invitee. These protocols are in effect amendments or additions to the Treaty, which once signed and ratified by Allies, become an integral part of the Treaty itself and permit the invited countries to become parties to the Treaty.
- 4) **Accession protocols are ratified by NATO countries:** The governments of NATO member states ratify the protocols, according to their national requirements and procedures. The ratification procedure varies from country to country. For example, the United States requires a two-thirds majority to pass the required legislation in the Senate. Elsewhere, for example in the United Kingdom, no formal parliamentary vote is required.



- 5) **The Secretary General invites the potential new members to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty:** Once all NATO member countries notify the Government of the United States of America, the depository of the Washington Treaty, of their acceptance of the protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty on the accession of the potential new members, the Secretary General invites the new countries to accede to the Treaty.
- 6) **Invitees accede to the North Atlantic Treaty in accordance with their national procedures.**
- 7) **Upon depositing their instruments of accession with the US State Department invitees become NATO members.**

Conclusions

Although the subject of NATO enlargement was not a key question during the Riga summit, the membership issue remains one of high importance on the agenda. Since the last round of enlargement in 2004, there are three countries still in the candidate list waiting for admission: Albania, Croatia and FYROM. The American advocacy in favor of Ukraine and Georgia has led to the introduction of Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro into the membership debate. These three countries have already been working for an eventual admission to the Alliance in the long run.

During the recent past, enlargement was the subject of intense debates with Russia as well as within the Alliance. Even today there is no solid response to this question and it is foremost a responsibility of the Alliance to produce a clear political position on the future of the “open door” policy. This is why NATO has already scheduled a summit meeting for spring 2008, during which the center of the discussion will be the enlargement process. But in order to do so, it is important to reach to a consensus on three central questions. And this is going to be our main task. The first question is to outline all the lessons we can take from the previous enlargement rounds. We must also try to foresee the implications of the United States’ emphasis on rapid accession procedures for Georgia and Ukraine. And finally, we must describe the consequences, both political and institutional, of future membership decisions.



If we try to make out the lessons from the past, inevitably we return to the debates within the Alliance between supporters and adversaries of NATO enlargement. Then, it is clear that arguments on each side have been revealed as unfounded.

The enlargement opponents' fear that "opening the door" would have negative complications on the decision-making process and thus hurting the ability of NATO to act decisively and immediately proved false. The Alliance reached its most difficult decision to date, the air strikes against the Milosevic regime as response to the Kosovo crisis, only a few days after three countries, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, had been admitted. Furthermore, all the problems in reaching consensus in the recent past have primarily arisen from the old member state, and only rarely from the new ones.

The argument that NATO enlargement would lead to a long-term confrontational relationship with the Russian Federation proved to be equally unfounded. On the contrary, it was possible for NATO to develop a sustainable cooperative relationship with Russia, even while admitting new member states. The current tensions over an increasingly authoritarian Russia are not the result of NATO enlargement, but a result of Russia's increasing ambitions over the energy arena.

The arguments of the supporters were also faulty in two occasions. Firstly, the integration of new members, even if they were regarded as advanced on the transformative path towards democracy, was much more difficult than anticipated, despite the widespread optimism. Even the military adaptation of the acceding countries to the armed forces minimum standards of NATO was exceedingly problematic. In addition, the reality of enlargement hardly agreed with the commonly expressed win-win situation in which the Alliance and the new members would equally gain. The actual contribution of most of the new members remains extremely limited. After the 2004 enlargement it became evident that relics of the bureaucratic and political past were still turning up in the political structures of certain new members. NATO thus confronts with problems concerning intelligence, especially the use of confidential communication and secret information.

Therefore, we can reach three, very useful for the future, conclusions. There is no ultimate, pre-determinable size for NATO. As in other organizations, the ability of the Alliance to act immediately and decisively depends more on efficient decision-making structures as well as an



actual convergence of interests of the member states, rather than on the number of members. Although it is important to understand that Russia's size and political status make it an invaluable partner for NATO, Moscow's political and strategic priorities are not a criterion for the enlargement process. The most important lesson, however, is that the enlargement is not a self-existing goal. On the contrary, the accession of more candidates must depend on the capacity of the aspirants to strengthen the Alliance as a whole. This was already one of the core demands of the 1995 NATO enlargement study, which, however, has not always been implemented since then.

Now, we should examine the implications of the debate over the accession of Georgia and Ukraine. Since 2005, Washington has been advocating the rapid admission of the two ex-Soviet republics, based primarily upon the strategic importance of both countries. Behind this reasoning, however, there is the desire to support the pro-western political elites in the region and to bring additional pro-American partners into the Alliance to counter the increasing political weight of EU countries in the NATO's decision-making process. Even though Great Britain, Poland and other US friendly member states, the majority of NATO partners rejected them.

The adversaries' first argument is that both countries are far from ready for accession. Especially Ukraine, as the second largest country in Europe after Russia, would be difficult to integrate. The most recent political developments in Ukraine have also shown that a majority of both the public and the political elites are not interested in NATO accession. There is also the fear that Georgia's extremely dicey relations with Russia could raise NATO's commitment to protect its members according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The Alliance could be drawn into a military altercation with Russia given these tenuous circumstances. It is also pointed out, especially by Germany, that for Ukraine and Georgia to join the Alliance would be hard without renewed consideration of the candidates Albania, Croatia and FYROM, which have been waiting and striving for accession for many years. Therefore, there could likely be five countries joining NATO, even though seven new members joined only in 2004. Finally, the process of transatlantic rapprochement would be jeopardized once again. Successful and harmonic cooperation between NATO partners on both sides of the Atlantic was based on a mutual gentlemen's agreement, that Washington would no longer see NATO as a political tool and would take part in developing common euro-atlantic positions. In return, the Europeans, with the exception of France, accepted



the American idea of a Global Partnership and worldwide role for the Alliance's forces. If the US government decides to burden the agreement with a controversy over divisive candidates, this would most certainly tip the balance.

For now, the Allies have successfully asserted their concerns, and the Bush administration has stated that it will at least suspend the active promotion of rapid accession procedures for Ukraine.

A number of conclusions can be taken from the experience of previous enlargement processes as well as the current orientation the political debate has taken.

First of all, during the past years the admission of new members into the Alliance was primarily used as a policy for transforming Eastern Europe. The September 11th attacks have widened the pool of possible allies in the fight against terrorism, and the search for new anti-terrorism partners became a new priority. In both cases, the military and political capabilities of new members were of secondary importance. In the meantime, NATO was transformed from a Euro-centric defence alliance to a globally geared peacekeeping and peace-building provider on worldwide scale. At this time, there are five major NATO operations in Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Darfur and Iraq. Thus, the criteria for the efficiency of the Alliance has less to do with the democratization of Eastern Europe and more with NATO's performance in running military operations. For the admission of new candidates, this means that each future enlargement must also mean enrichment: the benefits of membership must not be enjoyed by the new members, but must also be recognizable for current and future missions as well.

NATO enlargement can be complicated by further developments at the EU level. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania seems to be the last enlargement round for the foreseeable future. This enlargement fatigue, can suspend the strategic coupling of EU membership with NATO membership. An accession to the North Atlantic Alliance would not automatically lead to the prospect of EU admission. The incentives to accelerate development and change in candidate countries could thus lose appeal. So it is of great importance to compensate for the loss of EU prospect, in order to sustain the rate of progress of the reforms in the interested countries.

Of the three official candidates, Croatia at best demonstrates a certain readiness for accession in the sense described above. This was recently reaffirmed with the accession of Croatia into the



Partnership for Peace initiative. FYROM and especially Albania (most definitely) do not fulfill the criteria set by the 1995 Study on NATO enlargement. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro are also not likely to achieve membership readiness all too soon. This picture is likely to remain fixed until the preparations for the summit of 2008.

Georgia and Ukraine represent another class of potential aspirants. While the Atlantic Alliance has committed itself to the long-term goal of stability in the Balkan region, such a commitment does not exist for Ukraine and Georgia, although the Alliance has established a special relationship to Ukraine parallel to the NATO-Russia Council.

In certain academic and military circles, the idea is occasionally broached that NATO should pursue the admission of members outside of Europe. Even a NATO membership for Israel is suggested with regularity. Despite the fact that it occasionally emerges, given the current political situation, this option does not seriously come into question. For one, Article 10 of the NATO treaty clearly states that NATO may admit European states into the Alliance. Enlargement steps beyond the geopolitical region of Europe would require a change of the Washington Treaty. The alternative medium way of the Mediterranean Initiative has been chosen instead, as complementarily to the PFP initiative, for extending partnership beyond the European realm.

The Mediterranean Initiative

Throughout the Cold War, NATO paid little attention to developments in the Mediterranean region which were not related to the Soviet Union. NATO began to focus on the region in the 1960's with the creation of the Expert Working Group on the Middle East and the Maghreb, and later of the Ad Hoc Group on the Mediterranean. Composed of regional specialists, these groups conducted monitoring of Soviet related activities, as well as political assessments of region specific issues.

In the early 1990's the Group began to evaluate the emergence of new security risks in the Mediterranean as the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the growth of instability and extremism in North Africa, and the conflict in Bosnia. Fearing that the consequences of these



developments could pose serious threats to the security of Southern members of the Alliance, these countries began to call for a more robust NATO interest in the problems affecting the region. The result of these political pressures was the inclusion of the Alliance's interest in the South Mediterranean and the Middle East, in the renewed Strategic Concept, which was adopted in Rome in November 1991. Three years later, on the 1994 NAC meeting, NATO decided to establish contacts, on a case-by-case basis, between the Alliance and non-member countries of the region.

The prime goal of the NATO Mediterranean Initiative is to achieve mutual understanding and to contribute to the enhancement of stability in the region, by making the Alliance's aims better understood. Exchanges of views and information are designed to foster transparency and an improved comprehension of security issues of mutual interest. These aims are in accordance to the Strategic Concept, which indicates three elements that support the security policy of NATO: dialogue, cooperation, and the maintenance of a collective defence capacity.

On February 8, 1995, NATO announced that the Initiative would include Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The decision of the NAC made clear that it intended to adopt a phased approach and that, new countries, could be invited to join in the future. Indeed, Jordan was invited to join just a few months afterwards. Contacts between NATO and regional partners began in May 1995.

Now, there is an increasing tendency towards dialogue and cooperation with the regional partners, based on the two key decisions taken at the NATO summit in Istanbul in June 2004. Countries participating in the Initiative were invited to establish a more ambitious partnership. In parallel, a new, distinct but complementary process, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, was launched to reach out to interested countries in the broader Middle East.

There are a number of reasons why NATO strives so much to promote dialogue and stability in North Africa and the broader Middle East. One reason is that most of today's primary security risks –terrorism, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, failed states and organized crime- are common to both NATO members and to countries of these regions. Moreover, in addressing these risks, NATO is becoming more engaged in areas beyond Europe, as it tries to acquire a global role.



Many of these global military and political operations take place in these regions, so constant consultation with the regional partners is invaluable.

The unresolved political and strategic issues can potentially produce instability. Issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain a major source of tension. A lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict should be a priority for the countries of the region and the international community. And although, the Alliance has not directly intervened in the conflict resolution process, the most important of its members- the United States and the members of the EU- are two of the parties of the Quartet.

Finally, there is the issue of energy security, as Europe's imports of oil and gas through the Mediterranean consist about 65% of the whole. And the protection of the fuel transportation is equally important to consumers, as it is for producers.

The Mediterranean Initiative and its recent developments is based on certain principles. Firstly, the development of the Dialogue is based on joint ownership. This includes respect for each individual partner's cultural and political diversity and inclusion of these factors in the context of the Dialogue. This dialogue is viewed as a progressive process in terms of participation and substance, allowing the growth of the number of partners and the evolution of its content.

All Mediterranean partners should be offered cooperation and discussion with NATO on the same basis. Dialogue countries, though, are free to choose the extent of their participation, allowing a certain degree of differentiation. The non-discriminatory principle is essential for the efficiency of this establishment.

There are two dimensions in the Mediterranean dialogue: the political and the practical. The political dimension consists of regular bilateral meetings, involving each country separately, as well as multilateral meetings involving all seven participants. They both take place at ambassadorial and working levels. Political consultations with individual partners are held annually. These meetings provide an opportunity for sharing views on a range of issues relevant to security in the region, as well as further development of the process.

The Istanbul decision, to create an expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue, calls for the enhancement of the political dimension, including ministerial meetings and the adoption of a



joint political declaration. On 8 December 2004, NATO foreign ministers and their counterparts from the dialogue countries met for the first time at ministerial level during the 10th anniversary of the Dialogue.

The Dialogue also has practical goals to pursue. Since 1997, an Annual Work Program has been established including seminars, workshops and other practical activities. The Work Program has been expanded to include 21 areas of cooperation, notably in the fields of information, science and the environment, civil emergency planning, crisis management, defence policy and strategy, border security, small arms and light weapons, humanitarian mine action, defence reform and defence economics, as well as consultations on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The military dimension of the Annual Work Program entails invitations to Dialogue countries to observe and participate in NATO military exercises, attend courses and other academic activities at the NATO School and the NATO Defence College in Rome, and visit other NATO military bodies. The military program also includes port visits by NATO's Standing Naval Forces, on side training of trainers by mobile training teams, and visits by NATO experts to assess possibilities for further cooperation in the military field. Consultation meetings on the military program involving military representatives from NATO and the seven Dialogue countries are held twice a year. In an early manifestation of the enhancement of the Dialogue, the first formal meeting of the NATO Military Committee at the level of chiefs of defence staff, with the participation of the regional partners, took place at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in November 2004. Discussions included a strong focus on the need for efficient counter-terrorist intelligence sharing and ways of facilitating cooperation to achieve this.

The practical interaction between NATO and Mediterranean Dialogue countries is well embodied by past and present contributions made by Egypt, Jordan and Morocco to NATO-led operations in the framework of the Implementation Force and the Stabilizing Force in Bosnia, and the Kosovo Force.

Ways to strengthen cooperation with Dialogue partners were introduced at NATO summit meetings in Washington (1999) and Prague (2002). At the Istanbul summit in 2004 the Dialogue



was taken one step further with the aim of elevating it to a genuine partnership. Taking advantage of the fact that opportunities for cooperation had increased, the Allies proposed a more ambitious partnership. The main objectives of the Initiative remain the same but focus is now on developing the practical aspects of cooperation. Specific objectives are the enhancement of the political dialogue, the improvement of joint military operations, the contribution to the fight against terrorism and the cooperation in the area of defence reform.

Proposals are to expand and strengthen practical cooperation in a number of areas such as: joint public diplomacy efforts to explain NATO's cooperative efforts, promotion military cooperative activities, improvement of the scope for the participation of Dialogue country forces in NATO-led crisis response operations such as disaster and humanitarian relief, search and rescue, and peace-support operations, promoting democratic control of armed forces and facilitating transparency in defence planning and budgeting, combating terrorism, for example through effective intelligence sharing and cooperation in the context of NATO's maritime anti-terrorism measures in the Mediterranean, contributing to NATO's work on the threat from weapons of mass destruction, promoting cooperation in the sphere of border security, for example in connection with combating terrorism or countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and illegal trafficking, and enhanced cooperation on civil emergency planning, including the possibility, in the case of disaster situations for Mediterranean partners, to request the assistance of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center, which is based at NATO Headquarters.

Cooperation in a number of other areas is also being pursued. These include airspace management, armaments, conceptual aspects of defence and security, defence reform and defence economics, scientific and environmental issues, logistics, medical matters, meteorological issues, oceanography, standardization, exercises and training, and military education, training and doctrinal issues.

Enhanced cooperation may have included increased use of mechanisms such as the Trust Fund Policy that has provided support for projects such as the destruction of landmines and other munitions in a number of Partnership for Peace countries, the development of action plans and individual cooperation program and in exercises. Provision for appropriate legal and security



measures and liaison arrangements to facilitate the full participation of Mediterranean partners in these enhanced activities would also be required.

In a separate but complementary undertaking at Istanbul summit, the Alliance launched the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and invited interested countries in the broader Middle East region to take part, beginning with the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). The objective is to foster mutually beneficial bilateral relations with the countries of the region as a means of enhancing regional security and stability, with a particular focus on practical cooperation in the defence and security fields. Key priorities are the fight against terrorism and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Initiative complements other international processes and initiatives relating to the area, including NATO's parallel but distinct Mediterranean Dialogue, but does not duplicate any of them nor seek to create a political debate over issues more appropriately handled in other fora.

As with the Mediterranean Dialogue, it is based on the principle of joint ownership, which means fully respecting the mutual interests of NATO and of the participating countries, taking into account their diversity and specific needs. It will focus on practical cooperation in areas where NATO can "add value" – in other words areas such as security in particular where NATO's strengths and experience can be drawn on to create opportunities for contributing to longer-term security and stability in the region through forms of cooperation not available in other contexts.

The practical implementation of this Initiative will be based on specific activities involving different forms of cooperation and assistance, applying lessons learned and appropriate mechanisms and instruments derived from other NATO initiatives including the Partnership for Peace and the Mediterranean Dialogue. Such activities, tailored to individual needs, may include advice on defence reform, budgeting and planning and on civil-military relations; military-to-military cooperation aimed at improving interoperability including through participation in selected exercises and education and training programmes; case-by-case participation in NATO-led peace-support operations; fighting terrorism through information sharing and maritime cooperation, for example; contributing to Alliance work on the threat from weapons of mass destruction; promoting cooperation in the sphere of border security, for example in connection with combating terrorism or



countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and illegal trafficking; and cooperation in areas relating to civil emergency planning. NATO has developed a menu of practical activities in these priority areas which forms the basis of individual work plans to be jointly developed and implemented with interested countries.

As in the case of the Mediterranean Dialogue, an underlying requirement for the success of the Initiative is the development of ownership of its objectives and activities by the countries of the region. Recognizing this requirement, the policy document issued by NATO in July 2004 refers to the need for a clear understanding of NATO and of the objectives of the Initiative among governments and opinion-formers in participating countries. It proposes that consideration should be given to a joint effort of public diplomacy and a process of regular consultation, to ensure that the views of participating countries are taken into account as the Initiative is gradually developed and implemented.

Conclusions

Despite the wish of the Alliance to create a stable environment around Europe, the Mediterranean is not yet very high in its agenda. The latest round of enlargement was evident that Eastern Europe is the highest priority of NATO's strategic context. The new members, situated in central and eastern Europe, are still intimidated by Russia and not really interested in security in the Mediterranean. And that is contrary to the priorities of the US and the rest of the western Allies, which are the fight against terrorism and the threat of WMD proliferation.

There is also a number of impediments that obstruct the road to genuine cooperation in the Mediterranean. First of all, the Arab-Israeli conflict hinders the procedure from reaching to cooperative arrangements throughout the region. We should also note that external influences that foster regional conflicts complicate the conflict resolution procedure. Another obstacle is the gap that separates the North and the South. This gap is ideological, political, economical and military, and it cannot be easily overcome.



Therefore, we can see that the complex nature of problems in the Mediterranean basin cannot be addressed by one initiative alone. A combination of institutions and policies is necessary and in this context, the role of NATO should be complementary and auxiliary to that of the EU and the UN.

The Euro-Atlantic relationship is major factor for the shaping of the Mediterranean political system. The increasing divergence between the two sides of the Atlantic concerning international issues, especially in the near Middle East, is what will critically affect the future of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Initiative especially after the war in Iraq. An active and more balanced involvement by the US in the region can create more auspicious prospects for a genuine political partnership in the region.

NATO's Mediterranean dialogue is now on a crossroad of decisions on the future character of the regional partnership, and in general, the Alliance's strategy in the region. To be more specific, the Alliance should decide whether to focus on political and institutional cooperation, or to focus on hard security issues and defence cooperation. Considering that, contrary to EU's political and development advantages, NATO has the capacity to intervene in regional conflicts and crisis.

Finally, one must always bear in mind that the main objective of the Mediterranean Dialogue is to improve NATO's image in the region and to inform its partners in order to clear misperceptions.