NATO and the Middle East

The geopolitical context post-9/11

Mohammed Moustafa Orfy

Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics

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Despite having been active in the region since the mid-1990s, the role of NATO in the Middle East has attracted particular attention since the events of 11 September 2001. This book analyses the limits of NATO's role in the Middle East region and examines whether or not the Alliance is able to help in improving the fragile regional security environment through cooperative links with select Middle Eastern partners.

The author reviews the strategic importance of the region from a Western perspective and why it has become a source of instability in world politics, looks at US and international initiatives to counteract this instability and charts the development of NATO in this context. He also examines NATO's role with regards to two pressing Middle Eastern crises, Iraq and Darfur, assessing whether or not this role has been consistent with, if not an expression of, US strategic interests.

A comprehensive examination of the impacts of 9/11 events on world security and the development of NATO's role in the Middle East, this book is an important addition to the existing literature on security and strategic affairs, US foreign policy, Middle Eastern politics, European politics and terrorism studies.

Dr Mohammed Moustafa Orfy is an Egyptian diplomat, writer and academic lecturer. With a wide practical and academic experience in various fields including mass communication, diplomacy, international law, human rights and international relations, he has published four books and written numerous articles covering a wide range of foreign policy issues.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2011
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2010.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Orfy, Mohammed Moustafa.
NATO and the Middle East: the geopolitical context post-9/11 / Mohammed Moustafa Orfy.
p. cm. -- (Routledge studies in Middle Eastern politics ; 30)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization--Middle East. 2. European Union countries--Foreign relations--Middle East. 3. Middle East--Foreign relations--European Union countries. 4. United States--Foreign relations--Middle East. 5. Middle East--Foreign relations--United States. 6. Geopolitics--Middle East. I. Title.
JZ5930.O725 2010
355'.0310918210956--dc22
2010012563

ISBN 0-203-84235-9 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 978-0-415-59234-5 (hbk)
ISBN 978-0-203-84235-5 (ebk)

This book is dedicated to the soul of my beloved father (Moustafa Orfy); the man whose life was dedicated to me; who loved me as no one else ever did and whom I love more than anyone else.

God bless his soul.

It is also dedicated to my beloved mother Salwa El Bayome and sister Dr Moushira Orfy who suffered a lot during the whole period of my study. Without their continued support and encouragement, this work would not have been completed.

Finally, it is dedicated to those who do believe in the possibility of realising the desired peaceful coexistence between peoples of different origins.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to everyone who helped me during the long period of this research, especially my family and friends: Khaled Elmakwad, Dr. Abeer Bassuoiny, Dr Heba Negm, Dr Noha Bakr and Ahmed Megahed.

My gratitude and appreciation go to my supervisor Professor Chris Dixon (London Metropolitan University).

For their constructive suggestions and criticism, I would like to express my full appreciation to Professor Klausen, Harvard University and Dr Douglas, An-Najah National University.

Acronyms

ICI	The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative: Exploratory cooperation between NATO and select Gulf countries
MD	The Mediterranean Dialogue: Exploratory cooperation between NATO and select South Mediterranean countries
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (a.k.a. the North Atlantic Alliance, the Atlantic Alliance)
PFP	Partnership for Peace: The cooperative relationship between NATO and central and Eastern European countries

Introduction

The geopolitical context of NATO's role in the Middle East

This book seeks to explore the nature and scope of the growing relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Middle East[1] from 1994[2] onwards. This evolving relationship has been affected and characterised by complexity, with each aspect facing its own internal and external challenges. Moreover, the international arena, ever shifting and changing, has had its own impact on the pace and depth of this growing relationship.

With the end of Cold War, NATO embarked on an enormous and ongoing transformation process with a view to re-identifying its main tasks, revising its long-standing policies and developing tools to address its peripheries, especially those of strategic importance. As part of this transformation process, NATO recognised the high importance of the Middle East region, consequently developing policies aimed at handling its security concerns there. In doing so, NATO launched a dialogue initiative with select South Mediterranean countries[3] at the 1994 Brussels Summit. The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) initiative constitutes phase one in the transformation of NATO's Middle Eastern policy and has been gradually developed thereafter.

After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, NATO decided to widen the scope and extent of this dialogue in order to instil a sense of partnership with MD participants. Moreover, at the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO launched another initiative, in similar vein, aimed at forging security ties with Arab Gulf countries.[4] This initiative is known as the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). The two parallel tracks of MD and ICI constitute the main vehicle for reviewing and extending NATO's role in the Middle East. These two initiatives, as explained in this book, aim at fostering new patterns of cooperation with select Middle Eastern countries. They are mainly focused on 'soft' security issues, such as mechanisms of consultation, exchange of expertise and military exercises. But NATO has also started to play a direct, if supporting, role in select Middle Eastern crises, such as Iraq and Darfur.

In order to evaluate and identify the parameters of the new NATO–Middle East relationship, this book reviews, outlines and analyses the internal and external challenges this relationship faces. Clearly, NATO and the Middle East are not approaching one another in a political and geostrategic vacuum; both fall under the shadow of US influence. Thus, it is difficult to separate this relationship from

the broader global context, including first and foremost the huge impact of the United States on both NATO and the Middle East. Indeed, it could be argued that understanding the Middle East region is not possible without relating it to – or in some way referring to – the role of the United States and the nature of its policies, especially after the events of 11 September 2001. Similarly, one cannot shed light on NATO's strategy or orientation towards the Middle East without taking into account the prominent role of the US in determining the pace and extent of the North Atlantic Alliance's transformation process since the end of the Cold War, as well as the scope of its Middle Eastern policy.

Against such a background, this book mainly concentrates on the impact of the events of 9/11 on the development and evolution of NATO's policies towards the region. The aim is to ascertain whether or not NATO has increased and enhanced its role in the Middle East region in an effective manner, in response to the new challenges that have emerged in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. This book also seeks to ascertain whether or not the United States has used NATO as a vehicle for its foreign policy in the Middle East region. The scope of this book – the relationship between NATO and the Middle East – has required and necessitated that the 'timeframe' under examination extend from the 1994 Brussels Summit, in which NATO embarked on its Middle Eastern policy review, to the 2006 Riga Summit that launched NATO's most recent proposals with respect to its growing role in the Middle East region.

Aims and contribution

This book intends to contribute to scholarly literature on the relationship between NATO and the Middle East region. The importance of the research contained herein emanates from the fact that there have been no systematic attempts to date to examine the relationship between NATO and the Middle East, and very little analysis of divisions between the two pillars of NATO, i.e. the United States and its European allies, on policy towards the region. Partly this is because the importance of NATO Middle Eastern policy has only come into focus after the events of 9/11. Before this time, research on the 'dialogue' between select South Mediterranean countries and the North Atlantic Alliance was scant. This book attempts to fill that gap, being the first comprehensive analysis of the topic. As such, this book does not seek to refute prior academic work. Instead, it aims to contribute to knowledge by systematically analysing the NATO–Middle East relationship and proposing, as the fruit of this effort, more specified topics for further research.

Hypotheses and methodology

The two main hypotheses that are examined in this research are as follows:

1 The events of 9/11 have changed the role of NATO in the Middle East.
2 NATO's role in the Middle East has become a tool of US foreign policy.

The importance of examining the first hypothesis emanates from the fact that the region of the Middle East has become the main concern of the world community – more specifically the Western community – particularly post-9/11. The region has been perceived as a standing source of instability that breads extremism, terrorism and unresolved regional conflicts. Consequently, American and international initiatives were launched with a view to enhancing development and modernisation in the region. Therefore, there is a need to ascertain whether or not NATO has increased its role in the region in the context of these initiatives and relative to enhancing stability in the region. This, in turn, helps in the task of examining and assessing whether or not NATO's new role in the region, post-9/11, is adequate to deter perceived dangers, specifically terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. How 9/11 has had an impact on the developing characteristics of NATO's Middle Eastern policy, and the attitudes of Middle Eastern partners, both before and after 9/11, towards the enhancement of NATO's role in the Middle East region, are also revealed.

As the following chapters illustrate, NATO's role pre-9/11 in the Middle East region was confined to a limited 'dialogue' with some Mediterranean countries. Select Southern European allies proposed this dialogue, namely Spain, Italy and Portugal. Following the events of 9/11, new initiatives have been launched to boost this role, though their efficacy remains unexamined. There is, therefore, a need to assess the content of these initiatives and to ascertain whether or not the parties concerned have implemented them. Also important is to assess whether these initiatives, practically speaking, enable NATO to get more involved in the Middle Eastern arena to help in handling its chronic problems. In order to do so, one must examine the related documents of the two parties (i.e. NATO as well as concerned states) in the two consecutive stages. Effective research would also reveal the responses of officials of the two sides with regards to these developments.

The second hypothesis, seeking to examine whether or not NATO has become a tool of US foreign policy in the region, is of utmost importance. It is widely believed in the Middle East that the United States has been implementing its policy, particularly post-9/11, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq, in order to control the region and deter its dangers. Rightly or wrongly, the prevailing assumption is that NATO equals the United States, and any NATO move is necessarily serving the grand strategy of the United States towards the Middle East region. Therefore, there is a need to ascertain whether or not NATO's role in the region, particularly post-9/11, is consistent with American policies or is a reflection of an amalgamation of the interests of the two pillars of the North Atlantic Alliance, i.e. the United States and its European allies. Existing literature is inconclusive on this point.

To examine these hypotheses, this research sets out to answer the following questions:

1 What actors have influenced the development of NATO's policy towards the region?[5]

2 How has NATO's Middle Eastern policy evolved within its ongoing transformation process that has laid down the foundations of its new global role, and what are its main features?[6]
3 What are the achievements and/or shortfalls of the NATO–Middle East relationship before and after 9/11? Has NATO enhanced and/or changed its role in the region to cope with post-9/11 ramifications?[7]
4 To what extent has the United States influenced NATO's role in the Middle East in the two stages under review (i.e. before and after 9/11)?[8]

As far as methodology is concerned, I conducted 44 interviews covering numerous issues relevant to the book topic. The importance of conducting a large number of interviews could be justified by the need to recognise that various perceptions about NATO's transformation process exist between the parties concerned, as well as to collect necessary information related to various parts of this research that could not be satisfied by literature available in the public domain. In other words, due to the fact that the modalities and overview of NATO's role in the region have been confined to official circles, because of attendant sensitivities and connectedness to the national security of states concerned, the available literature falls short of providing adequate information on some aspects of the NATO–Middle East relationship. Frequent visits in pursuit of this research were made to various European and Middle Eastern cities, including London, Brussels, Rome, Munich and Cairo, among others.

The criteria that was used in selecting interviewees ensured that the list should include the various desk officers of NATO and/or Middle Eastern affairs (either diplomats or military officers) in the countries concerned (MD and ICI participants), taking into account that some countries handle their relationship with NATO primarily in ministries of foreign affairs, while others do so by way of military institutions (mainly ministries of defence) with a certain level of coordination with other bodies concerned. This is, of course, understandable, as NATO's role in the region has political as well as military and security components.[9]

The list of interviewees also includes current and former officials, i.e. those who were involved in the dialogue process, since its inception, from the NATO side and some of its member states that are normally more active and concerned about Middle Eastern affairs (e.g. the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Greece). It was also of importance to interview the most prominent scholars and experts who have contributed to debate on this new issue.[10]

As for the two case studies (Egypt and Kuwait), it was essential to interview officials from various bodies that are responsible for handling the relationship with NATO, including the respective ministries of foreign affairs (MFA), ministries of defence, security agencies and academic experts who have followed or participated in the process. Additionally, it was important to meet former officials in order to trace and assess developments of the NATO–Egypt, NATO–Kuwait relationship. The selection of these two case studies (Egypt as a sample of MD and Kuwait as a sample of ICI) was the most appropriate because of a number of reasons among which is that the researcher was allowed to have proper access

to the necessary information. More importantly, the two countries have gotten distinctive relationships with NATO due to their regional circumstances.[11]

Some interviews were structured (particularly those conducted with MD and ICI officials) whereas others were either semi-formal or unstructured given shortages of time among high officials, restricting their ability to elaborate on details in some instances. Some questions were repeated in order to gain a certain level of consistency overall. Taking into account the nature of the research questions, which required examining a large amount of raw material, such as statements, press releases and declarations, as well as collecting, comparing and analysing various points of views and arguments compiled through the interviews, the use of qualitative research methods was the most appropriate.

Qualitative research is usually the preferred methodology when the content of the research is based on words, arguments and the points of views of participants or interviewees. Also, bearing in mind that the topic is still new and evolving, it was deemed that adopting this approach would enhance the emergence of concepts and conclusions out of compiled data through the various stages of the research. Finally, inductive strategy is associated with a qualitative research approach, therefore it was imperative to utilise an inductive approach, presenting observations and hypotheses to be tested in order to reach concrete results.

Research sources

Key relevant materials for this research include NATO documents, statements and declarations, made available to the public by NATO since the end of the Cold War as a gesture of goodwill and its peaceful intentions towards others. Some documents, of course, were categorised as classified and remain restricted to NATO officials. Available statements as well as other basic documents[12] constitute the key raw material of this research and were examined and discussed thoroughly with those interviewed. As a ranking diplomat, I was able to access officials in NATO headquarters and the foreign affairs ministries and military institutions of NATO allies as well as Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt and Kuwait as case studies.

More importantly, I was permitted, in some cases, to examine important documents related to the topic of research under agreed conditions. Further, the analysis contained in this book is based on frequent visits to NATO's Defence College (the main think-tank of the North Atlantic Alliance) where documents exist in their 'full version' along with other materials not available in the public domain. Accessibility to this rich source of basic documents helped in enriching the evaluations made in the following chapters, especially concerning NATO's role in the region before 9/11 and the ongoing relationship between NATO and the two countries covered as case studies (Egypt and Kuwait).

In particular, this research took advantage of proper access to the documents and files indispensable to examining and tracing the evolution of the relationship between NATO and the two case studies. Appreciatively, some Egyptian as well as Kuwaiti officials interviewed within the context of this research provided

useful information that could not have been obtained otherwise, given the sensitivities involved.[13]

Finally, I also had the opportunity to visit the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany, to participate in exclusive internal joint assessment sessions conducted by competent officials from both NATO and Middle Eastern countries on the achievements and shortfalls of MD and ICI mechanisms.

Originality of the research

The required originality of this book has been achieved as follows:

1. This study is the first systematic and comprehensive work on the topic of NATO's relationship with the Middle East region. Although NATO documents have been available to the public for several years, this research is the first to use, compile and analyse the substantial raw material of NATO statements, declarations and press releases on this subject. It should be underlined that NATO's involvement in the Middle East region is new and evolving. Indeed, despite the fact that the embryonic steps of NATO's policy towards the Middle East can be traced to the early and mid-1990s, its impact has only appeared in recent years. In part, this explains the absence of substantive analysis on this topic.
2. This research is firmly based on empirical work. The interview process attendant to this research included almost all experts and politicians with direct and indirect involvement, expertise and knowledge about this topic. Of course, some accepted to cooperate in varying degrees, while others declined due to the connection between NATO's role and the national security of concerned countries. Nonetheless, this research constitutes in itself a valuable resource, based as it is so extensively on primary sources. In addition, the views of academic experts about this newly emerging topic were also collected with a view to enriching the analytical foundation of this work.
3. This book proposes a new synthesis not attempted before. It is the first work that paints the broader picture of NATO's role in the Middle East region. Other studies have been confined to certain sub-regions or specific issues.[14] Additionally, this work is the first that explains, in detail, why NATO has been increasingly concerned with the Middle East: in the first instance for reasons of the strategic importance of the Middle East, and in the second instance as a consequence of, and driven by, the transformation process NATO has undergone as it searches for a new global role.

Theoretical framework

In developing this research, a wide range of possible theoretical frameworks were considered. Those that seemed most likely to inform an analysis of the growing relationship between NATO and the Middle East were the broad categories of liberalism, realism, constructivism and hegemonic stability theory. It also seemed

possible that there might be some merit in other approaches that at first glance seemed less relevant, such as Marxism, feminism, the English School, functionalism, post-colonial theory, critical theory and post-modernism.

Following a review of possible frameworks, an initial examination of NATO documents and some exploratory interviews with officials from NATO and Middle Eastern countries, it was concluded that the most suitable approach would be liberalism, and within this 'liberal institutionalism'. It soon appeared the only theory that provides an adequate and convincing explanation of the unfolding relationship between NATO and the Middle East. The reasons for sidelining other approaches are set out below in two subsections: 'more relevant' and 'less relevant' theories. This is followed by a detailed discussion of 'liberal institutionalism' and the reasons for its selection as the most appropriate theoretical framework for this research.

More relevant theories

To start with, realism helps in giving a preliminary explanation of the reasons and incentives of the evolving NATO–Middle East relationship. Kegley summarises some of its main propositions. 'People are by nature selfish and ethically flawed; the possibility of eradicating the instinct for power is a hopeless utopian aspiration; international politics is a struggle for power; the anarchical global system dictates that states acquire sufficient military capabilities; allies might be sought to increase a state's ability to defend itself, but their loyalty and reliability should not be assumed; states should never entrust the task of self-protection to international security organisations or international law, and should resist efforts to regulate international behaviour; if all states seek to maximise power, stability will result by maintaining a balance of power, etc.'[15]

Broadly speaking, realists have always given great regard to the values and calculations of state survival, national security and international stability. They consider these themes as the most important and influential factors framing international politics. They also emphasise the constraints on politics imposed by human selfishness (egoism) and the absence of international government (anarchy). Consequently, they are certain that 'anarchy' and 'egoism' greatly impede cooperation.[16]

To make it clearer, realists do not trust human nature. Nor do they believe in the necessity or possibility of fostering cooperation, particularly in the security field. Thus, they downplay the importance of pursuing moral objectives and ethical considerations in the conduct of international relations.

Donnelly writes that 'realists suggest that anarchy and egoism so severely constrain the space for the pursuit of moral concerns that it is only a small exaggeration to say that states in anarchy can not afford to be moral'.[17] He further explains that 'realism is a theory [tuned] to explaining constancy. Realists are more impressed by the repeated occurrence of certain patterns across time than by the undeniable historical and cultural diversity of actors and interactions in international relations'.[18] The same scholar also states that 'Statesmanship thus

involves mitigating and managing, not eliminating, conflicts; seeking a less dangerous world, rather than a safe, just, or peaceful one. Ethical considerations must give way to 'reason of state'.[19] In line with this, Morgenthau confirms that 'The actions of states are determined not by moral principles and legal commitments but by considerations of interests and power'.[20] Art and Waltz concur that states in anarchy cannot afford to be moral.[21]

Having excluded – or at least underplayed – the importance of ethical and moral considerations, it is no surprise that the core concept of this theory is 'power' and its uses in shaping the relationships between states.

Jackson and Sorensen explain:

> Realists believe that the goal of power, the means of power, and the uses of power are the central preoccupation of political activity. International politics is thus portrayed as 'power politics'. The conduct of foreign policy is an instrumental activity based on the intelligent calculation of one's power and one's interests as against the power and interests of rivals and competitors.[22]

It is noteworthy that there are two main groups of scholars within the theory of realism, which are sometimes understood as 'offensive' and 'defensive' realists. The first group holds that states are, by nature, aggressive and seek territorial expansion; the later group is preoccupied with the various security calculations that underpin the continuity of states and the tools of ensuring their survival. Shiping explains the major difference between these two groups, stating that in offensive realism, states usually seek security by internationally decreasing the security of others.[23] The conflict of interests is imperative; there is no possibility of cooperation among states other than forming temporary alliances. On the other hand, in defensive realism states do not seek security at the expense of the security of others, therefore cooperation should not be ruled out as an option for resolving conflicts.

Given these dimensions of realist theory, which occupies a prominent position in the interpretation of many events of international politics, it could be presumed that NATO, as the most powerful military, political and security alliance in the world, has been seeking to impose its will and force on Middle Eastern countries – Arab ones at least[24] – to accept its diktat under slogans like 'dialogue' or 'cooperation'. These slogans are, perhaps, paving the way towards a more serious and/or interventionist policy in which harsh measures could be taken against the parties concerned. Put another way, taking advantage of the leverage of its huge power in comparison to the weak and fragmented states of the Middle East region, NATO is, perhaps, seeking to bring to the region new rules that could contribute, in the long term, positively to its own security, regardless of – and in negligence to – the national security calculations of these countries. Against this background, it could be suggested that NATO considers and perceives that the post-Cold War world is in a period of anarchy and liquidity in which harsh or hard policies have to be applied, at least towards certain countries.

But a number of factors cast doubt on the utility and usefulness of this theory in examining the existing relationship. First, this relationship was, and still is, of

a voluntary nature. Middle Eastern partners were not obliged to establish such a relationship. Instead, they were invited by the Alliance. More precisely, NATO invited those countries that normally held positive positions vis-à-vis Western policies in various international forums to join its new endeavour in the Middle East region. This confirms that the relationship has evolved as a cooperative and optional one. Also, nothing prevents any Middle Eastern partners withdrawing or freezing its cooperative links at any stage, because there is neither coercion apparent nor anything legally binding in the current relationship.

Additionally, it seems unrealistic to suggest that NATO, in launching its new endeavour in the Middle East, holds hostile intentions towards its partners. Suffice it to say that its key component states, most importantly the United States, often uphold distinctive bilateral relations with concerned Middle Eastern partners; one cannot conclude or expect that these relationships will be sacrificed or threatened for the sake of realising the overall or collective objectives of NATO. Further, being an alliance of democratic states – 26 members currently[25] – it is difficult to achieve the required concurrence between members if the matter is related to hostile or aggressive policy, taking into account the fact that all decisions must be taken by consensus, according to the 1949 Washington Treaty.

At the current stage, the pragmatic[26] relationship between NATO and Middle Eastern countries has not been compromised seriously by the issue of reform, nor has there been any request that Middle Eastern partners should consider this, even in the tense atmosphere that has prevailed as a result of the events of 9/11. So no claim can be made that Middle Eastern partners were obliged to follow certain types of policies within the context of their relationship with NATO. Finally, and most importantly, the nature, mandate and scope of this relationship does not fit within the context of realism, because this cooperation which focuses upon soft security issues, i.e. improving the capabilities of partners with respect to civil emergency, environmental security and combating terrorism, etc. – all is certainly beneficial for the concerned partners. Not only this, but also NATO subsides the participation of most of its MD partners in these activities.

For all these reasons, the relevance of realism to the context of this study can be deemed marginal, if not ruled out. The core concepts of the theory are not reflected in the unfolding relationship between NATO and the Middle East.

Another theory that could provide a distinctive explanation of the reasons for NATO's endeavours in the Middle East is 'constructivism'. This theory has gained much credibility in the post-Cold War era, 'as the sudden end of the Cold War undermined the explanatory pretensions of neo-realists and neo-liberals, neither of which had predicted, nor could adequately comprehend, the systemic transformation reshaping the global order'.[27] In other words, the inability of other theories to predict or justify the major and sudden developments that took place in the 1990s required a new thinking about international interactions in this new undefined era.

Constructivism can be defined as a theory 'that sees self-interested states as the key actors in world politics; their actions are determined not by anarchy but by the ways that states socially construct and then accept images of reality and

later respond to the meanings given to power politics. As consensual definitions change, it is possible for either conflictual or cooperative practices to evolve'.[28] Broadly speaking, the theory underlines the importance of ideas, i.e. thoughts, fears, perceptions, goals, threats, etc. and their far-reaching impact on the international arena. Its advocates believe that cooperation between states could be realised and enhanced by establishing a structure of ideas and concepts among parties concerned.

Reus-Smit states that:

> Where neo-realists emphasise the material structure of the balance of power, and Marxists stress the material structure of the capitalist world economy, constructivists argue that systems of shared ideas, beliefs and values also have structural characteristics, and that they exert a powerful influence on social political action.[29]

It is worth mentioning that some scholars give more emphasis to 'democracy' and its role and impacts within this context, particularly in the post-Cold War years. For example, Jervis writes:

> Constructivism points to the norm of non-violence and the shared identities that have led the advanced democracies to assume the role of each other's friend through the interaction of behaviour and expectations. In contradiction to the liberal and realist expectations, constructivism downplays the importance of material factors and elevates ideas, images of oneself and others and concepts of appropriate conduct.[30]

The basic principles of this theory could be summarised as follows: a) the importance of normative and ideational structure because thoughts shape the social identities of political actors; b) understanding how non-material structures condition actors' identities is important because identities inform interests and, in turn, actions; and c) agents and structures are mutually constituted. Normative and ideational structures may well condition the identities and interests of actors, but those structures would not exist if it were not for the knowledgeable practices of those actors.[31] Frederking writes, 'constructivism asserts the existence of social structure – including norms, beliefs and identities, constituting world politics'.[32]

On this basis, it could be argued that NATO is establishing such a relationship and/or 'social structure' with Middle Eastern countries to enhance its influence and promote its own basic values, notably democracy and liberalism. As frequently stated in NATO documents, establishing such cooperative ties in the Middle East region could support stability that might in turn alleviate or reduce the intensity of long-standing sources of danger. This 'social structure' would also be conducive to promoting the influence of NATO in Middle Eastern affairs.

On closer scrutiny, however, constructivist theory falls short of providing a convincing explanatory framework for the core of this present research. Significantly, NATO, as a military alliance, has nothing to present in the context

of 'ideas' and/or promoting liberal or democratic concepts. It is true that some cooperative activities, as shown in the pages to follow, do include related topics such as defence reform or civilian control over military forces. However, NATO has always paid due respect and attention to regional sensitivities and complications in this regard. Put another way, NATO has realised its inability to help other international efforts exerted to reach such ends.[33] In addition, one cannot claim that MD and/or ICI processes have successfully created a normative or ideational structure. The following chapters clarify that there is still a noticeable degree of reluctance and suspicion between NATO and Middle Eastern partners, and also among the Middle Eastern partners. The 13-year-old MD, for example, did not contribute in reducing the intensity of long-standing conflicts in the region. Nor did it bring about any significant change in prevailing perceptions and/or misperceptions between Arabs and Israelis on security matters.

Furthermore, the fact that the ongoing process is between states and an alliance weakens, to a great extent, the utility of constructivist theory that gives high importance to individuals and NGOs as key actors – contrary to other theories, such as realism, that see states as the key actors, and liberalism that underlines the importance of states *and* institutions.

As far as the theory of 'hegemonic stability' is concerned, it could be mentioned that this theory might help in explaining why the two parties with which this book is concerned – NATO and Middle Eastern countries – have agreed to cooperate. According to this theory, powerful states normally foster international orders that are stable; that conflict only occurs when parties disagree about their relative power.[34] In the light of this, it could be theorised that Middle Eastern countries were obliged to accept the proposed cooperation as the only available option offered by hegemonic power.

Kenberry explains:

> Hegemonic stability theory holds that order is created and maintained by a hegemonic state, which uses power capabilities to organise relations among states. The preponderance of power held by a state allows it to offer incentives, both positive and negative, to other states to agree to participate within the hegemonic order.[35]

Snidal adds:

> The theory, to state it baldly, claims that the presence of a single, strongly dominant actor in international politics leads to a collectively desirable outcome for all states in the international system. Conversely, the absence of a hegemon is associated with disorder in the world system and undesirable outcomes for individual states.[36]

Accordingly, it could be suggested that NATO did present itself as a hegemonic power in the Middle East so that it could restore order, or at least help in improving the fragile security environment. Consequently, Middle Eastern partners had

no choice but to cooperate, in varying degrees, with NATO in its new endeavour in the region.

But this theory is simply not applicable, given the context. The United States, the world hegemonic power, has great influence in NATO and the Middle East, but it was not – as discussed – enthusiastic about launching the MD process in mid-1990s.[37] So it could not be claimed that the hegemonic power sought to, via NATO by proxy, establish cooperative links with Middle Eastern partners. It is also important to indicate that the United States in this period, the 1990s, was not in need for such a process as it had maintained distinctive strategic alliances with key countries in the region, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The situation changed afterwards due to the ramifications of the events of 9/11, but the United States, in all cases, was adamant in pursuing its own unilateral policies with or without the assistance of NATO. Also, it is unrealistic to suggest that NATO might serve the interests of European allies in a way that might contradict US interests.

From the Middle East perspective, it is not possible to perceive or suggest that partners such as Egypt and Jordan were too deeply concerned about the new orientation of NATO, particularly taking into account their special relationships with the United States as well as other key European allies. Therefore, it is not possible to consider that NATO itself could be perceived as a hegemonic power that dictates to others various forms of cooperation.

Less relevant theories

Briefly, functionalism argues that the common interests of states can have a great impact on international relations; 'integration' would create, thereafter, its own momentum. This is certainly useful in shedding light on the evolution of the European Union. But it cannot be used in the context of this study because NATO in the Middle East never sought in the past – nor will it seek in the foreseeable future – to achieve any sort of full security or political integration between Middle Eastern partners and the allies of the Euro-Atlantic arena. Contemplating the future, one can rule out such a possibility in the coming decade taking into account the disparity of current circumstances between the Middle East region and the Euro-Atlantic arena as well as the nature of chronic or long-standing conflicts in the Middle East. Of course, there are countless interests that might encourage parties to achieve certain levels of partnership, but the political and security obstacles present are too high to be overcome at the current stage. As the following chapters discuss, MD and ICI processes were, and still are, tied by their limited mandates.

As for the theory of Marxism, it concentrates on economic factors, positing these as decisive. It is well known that Marx and Engels were mainly interested in modes of production, class conflict, social and political revolution and the economic and technological unification of the human race.[38] The theory's worldwide view is mainly concerned with capitalism and its impact on relations among states as well as with historical materialism and its emphasis on production, property relations and class.

Linklater clarifies that:

> Marxism has long been centrally concerned with capitalist globalisation and international inequalities, and that, for Marxism, the global spread of capitalism is the backdrop to the development of modern societies and the organisation of their international relations.[39]

Marxism, as a theory, was criticised by realists who claim it is too much concerned with how societies have interacted with nature rather than with how they have interacted with each other in ways that often led to major war.[40]

It is evident that the core concepts of Marxist theory are not relevant to the unfolding relationship between NATO and the Middle East. As its critics claim, Marxist theory makes no significant contribution in explaining or justifying the emergence and/or collapse of cooperative security links among states. Indicatively, the NATO–Middle East relationship has its two-fold approach: political dialogue and cooperative activities. It never included any economic aspects, nor did it relate itself to economic relationships between the two sides. Since its inception, the process has been exclusive to the competent authorities of both sides; consequently, it has had no impact on the societies concerned or internal relations between various societal layers. Thus, it could be confirmed that Marxism as a theory cannot be helpful in this context.

Likewise, feminism seems inadequate in this context. Factually, feminist theories of international relations have proliferated since the early 1990s and have contributed in current debate about the repercussions of 9/11. Feminist scholars concentrate on non-state actors, marginalised peoples and the impacts of gender in the international arena. It is argued that the theory's interpretation of security is particularly relevant to the post-9/11 era. For example, some feminist theorists consider that beliefs about gender and sexual difference are behind contemporary terrorist acts against the West. For example, True maintains:

> Feminist scholars argue that notions of power, sovereignty, autonomy, anarchy, security and the level of analysis and typology in international relations are inseparable from the gender division of the public and private sphere, institutionalised within and across states.[41]

Further, he adds that:

> With their focus on non-state actors, marginalised peoples and alternative conceptualisations of power, feminist perspectives bring fresh thinking and action in the post-9/11, decentred and uncertain world.[42]

Yet it is clear that feminist theory has no relevance to NATO's role in the region of the Middle East. This is because the dialogue process has never tied itself to gender issues or alternative conceptualisations of power. The process did emerge in mid-1990s and, as is shown in this book, took on greater momentum due to the

events of 9/11. But it could not be claimed that this is only a result of the repercussions of that event. Also, taking into account that cooperative links are exclusively running between governments and NATO, the core concepts of feminist theory – non-state actors and marginalised peoples – cannot be found, in any way, within this context.

With regards to the English School, it is mainly concerned with maintaining order and how best to promote the principles of justice. The core concept of this school or theory is that sovereign states form a society, although it is anarchical in nature. In doing so, sovereign states do not submit to a higher authority. Theorists of the English School have been influenced by, in varying degrees, some postulates of realism and idealism. They consider violence as an inevitable result of the nature of existing society (anarchy). The theory 'has supported the rationalist or Grotian tradition, seeking a middle way, between the "power politics" of realism and the "Utopianism" of revolutionism'.[43]

Linklater clarifies:

> The English School is interested in the processes that transform the system of states into societies of states and in the norms and institutions that prevent the collapse of civility and the re-emergence of unbridled power. It is also concerned with the question of whether societies of states can develop means of promoting justice for individuals and their immediate association.[44]

Thus, the concepts of this school are not overtly connected to the evolving relationship between NATO and the Middle East. The NATO dialogue process has nothing to do with forming a 'society of states'. Nor does it contribute towards achieving justice in the region. Neither has the process reduced violence in the region, particularly between Arabs and Israelis. NATO never claimed it could achieve such a big objective in the foreseeable future. It is true that the declared aim of the process is to contribute towards the enhancement of regional security. As the following chapters illustrate, NATO's involvement in the Middle East has achieved some 'relative' enhancement of regional security. However, the overall condition remains explosive. Furthermore, achieving internal and/or external justice within and among Middle Eastern partners was not a goal envisaged within the context of NATO's endeavour in the region.

Moving to post-colonial theory, one may, at the first glance, recognise the fact that some NATO allies (for example France, Italy and the United Kingdom) were colonial powers in the last century or before. Coupled with this, all Middle Eastern partners – with the exception of the State of Israel – were under Western colonialism for long decades. Thus, some relevance to theories of post-colonialism can be ascertained in this context.

To begin with, theories of post-colonialism provide broad explanations applicable to many related fields – politics, economy, ethics, etc. They also stress the importance of certain concepts, like 'power', culture and identity. The main argument is that Western political theories may not be applicable to the politics of non-Western countries, because the experiences of the colonial powers are

significantly different from those countries that were conquered and occupied. The theory holds to the view that post-colonial states are not integrated into the international decision-making process on various fields. Consequently, the theory advocates that there is a necessity to develop a new form of universalism; that the current pillars of international order were evolved and established according to only one perspective, that of European visions.

Grovogui explains:

> Post-colonialism begins with the truism that European institutions have occupied a central place in the development of such concepts as international order, international morality, and international law. But post-colonialism [also] asks questions about the international order and international law and morality that do not comply with disciplinary verities or received notions of critique and judgement.[45]

Grovogui also underlines that post-colonial antipathy is emanating from a growing desire to resist new forms of hegemony, i.e. setting up the terms and rules of politics and handling international affairs unilaterally, etc.[46]

Initially, it could be claimed that NATO is, perhaps, serving as a new link or cooperative vehicle between Western powers and formerly colonised countries in the region of the Middle East. This new relationship is a transformation that presents both dangers and opportunities. But some flaws undermine this vision. First, the NATO process has nothing to do with the heritage of the problematic atmosphere that shaped the relationship between the two sets of parties in the last century. The criteria that were used for inclusion and/or exclusion of Middle Eastern countries cannot fit in this context either. For example, some formerly colonised countries, like Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, were not invited to join the process.

Second, nothing in ongoing cooperative links or political dialogue is consistent with post-colonial theory and its postulates. The current relationship remains horizontal. And while it is well known that NATO runs the relationship, no aspect of the process was forced upon, or ran against, the interests of the 'weak and fragmented' Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, one of the guiding principles of the process is the concept of 'co-ownership', which implies that Middle Eastern partners can have a 'say' in the development of the relationship. Also relevant is that Middle Eastern partners never sought to use the process as a means of changing the current international structure. Nor did they relate the process, in any way, to the heritage of colonialism or their previous oppressors. On the contrary, NATO was either perceived in its own, as a military alliance or institution, or a tool of the United States, not former colonial states.

Regarding other less relevant theories of international relations, 'critical theory' underlines the importance of the link between knowledge and power; its world view seeking to shift the focus of security from sovereign states to humanity, in order to realise idealistic aims. As Devetak explains, 'Critical international theory's aim of achieving an alternative theory and practices of international

relations rests on the possibility of overcoming the exclusionary dynamics associated with the modern system of sovereign states and establishing a cosmopolitan set of arrangements that will better promote freedom, justice and equality across the globe'.[47] Thus, it can be easily deduced that critical theory cannot enlighten the process because none of these objectives was among the priorities of the NATO–Middle East relationship.

Also, 'democratic peace theory' – a derivative of liberalism that argues that the advance of democracy would help achieve a durable peace because liberal democracies almost never make war on one another – cannot prove useful in this context because its main postulate remains outside NATO's jurisdiction in the region. As for 'collective security theory', it assumes that the parties concerned will achieve and/or enhance their own security once they agree on certain rules within an established regime to reach this end. The approach holds the view that 'any potential aggressor would be deterred by the prospect of joint retaliation, but it goes beyond the military realm to include a wider array of security problems. It assumes that states will relinquish sovereignty and freedom of action or inaction to increasing interdependence and the premise of the indivisibility of peace'.[48] Certainly, this approach cannot fit in the context of the relationship between NATO and the Middle East, as it never imposed nor promised to give any kind of security reassurance or obligation to any party.

Likewise, the 'green theory' which gives great significance to the ecological crisis as well as other environmental issues and their impacts on the international arena cannot be deemed as related to the nature of the growing relationship between NATO and the Middle East. Finally, post-modernism is unable to contribute positively in this context. It is mainly preoccupied with states, sovereignty, violence and the inseparable ties between knowledge, power and politics. Post-modernist scholars claim that 'a global, decentralised society such as ours inevitably creates responses/perceptions that are described as postmodern, such as the rejection of what are seen as the false, imposed unities of meta-narrative and hegemony; the breaking of traditional frames of genre, structure and stylistic unity; and the overthrowing of categories that are the result of logo-centrism and other forms of artificially imposed order'.[49] Devetak writes, 'Post-modernism seeks to address [crucial issues] regarding interpretations and explanations of sovereign states'.[50] Clearly, NATO's role in the region of the Middle East has not been connected to, by any means, the practices of sovereign states, nor does it relate itself to any of the notions of this theory.

Liberalism

Generally speaking, the basic themes of liberalism include trust of human nature and conviction that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflicted, because 'the application of reason and universal ethics to international relations can lead to a more orderly, just and cooperative world. Anarchy and war can be policed by institutional reforms that empower international organisation and law'.[51]

Based on the conviction that the factor of state 'preferences', rather than its 'capabilities', is the most decisive and instrumental method in determining the nature of its foreign policy, liberal theory holds to the view that cooperation could be realised if enough efforts are exerted to improve or change state orientations in a way that is proper to reach this end. Jackson and Sorensen contend that:

> Liberals generally take a positive view of human nature. They have great faith in human reason and they are convinced that rational principles can be applied to international affairs. Liberals recognise that individuals are self interested and competitive up to a point. But they also believe that individuals share many interests and can thus engage in collaborative and cooperative social actions, domestically as well as internationally, which result in greater benefits for everybody at home and abroad.[52]

This trust in human nature is based on the conviction that human beings are rational and they can recognise their vital interests and how best to achieve them, because 'people have consistent and reasonable (or at least predictable) preferences, which they pursue rationally. As a result, well-designed political institutions within which people can rationally pursue their preferences in a way that interferes as little as possible with the abilities of others to do so will appeal sufficiently to people's reasonableness'.[53]

In the same context, Goodwin argues that:

> The preservation of the individual and the attainment of individual happiness are the supreme goals of a liberal political system. The individual person is to be regarded as inviolable, and all human life as sacrosanct; violence is therefore prohibited except in a way to preserve liberal society itself. The individual is also credited with knowledge of his own best interests and the ability to pursue them rationally.[54]

Thus, the theory rests on the assumption that there are numerous, perhaps countless, possibilities for cooperation, so that absolute gains could be achieved and peace could be maintained. Kegley argues:

> Because they perceive change in global conditions as progressing over time, halting but still in the same trajectory through cooperative efforts, neoliberal theorists maintain that the ideas and ideals of the liberal legacy could describe, explain, predict and prescribe international conduct in ways that [others] could not during the conflict-ridden Cold War.[55]

In line with this, it could be argued that NATO has been seeking to cooperate in the spirit of goodwill with Middle East region countries to deter common challenges and enhance the security and stability of the region for mutual benefit. Similarly, the positive responses of Middle Eastern countries so far – specifically MD partners and ICI Gulf States – are signs of appreciation and the desire to

bolster NATO's endeavour in the region based on the conviction that this relationship will have a positive impact on mutual security. It can be argued that the two parties are taking advantage of the nature of the post-Cold War era in which the hegemonic doctrine and hostile attitudes are not the most dominant factors in determining the course of international interactions between states.

Bearing in mind that the current relationship is running between Middle Eastern partners and NATO, as an institution, it seems that liberal institutionalism is the most appropriate theory for explaining, justifying and understanding the type and nature of this relationship. To elaborate, liberal institutionalists, contrary to realist lines of thought, contend that international anarchy can be mitigated by international cooperation that brings regularity to the conduct of international relations. The overall view is that cooperation between states can and should be organised and formalised in institutions and/or sets of rules that control, organise and govern state behaviour in specific policy areas, because establishing institutions or 'regimes' would automatically constrain state behaviour by formalising the expectations of each party towards specific issues. Also relevant is that this theory, which considers the state as the central actor in the international arena, gives great attention to the state's access to necessary and accurate information.

Kolodziej explains:

> States and governing leaders are viewed as rational actors. They don't deliberately take decisions or make moves that result in losses or unacceptable risks for themselves … They pursue their interests under conditions of anarchy, marked by great uncertainty about the implications of their behaviour … they lack the necessary information to act in ways that they can accurately and reliably predict the results of their mutually contingent behaviour with other actors.[56]

In order to achieve the desired cooperation, it is recommended to use institutions, as 'institutions also provide information to each of the actors to help coordinate their mutually contingent behaviour for shared, if not necessarily equal, benefits'.[57]

Burchill concurs:

> Institutions then assume the role of encouraging cooperative habits, monitoring compliance and sanctioning defectors … Regimes also enhance trust, continuity and stability in a world of ungoverned anarchy.[58]

Jackson and Sorensen also indicate that 'international institutions help promote cooperation between states and thereby help alleviate the lack of trust between states and states' fear of each other, which are considered to be the traditional problems associated with international anarchy'.[59]

Importantly, liberal institutionalist theory holds to the view that states can improve their security as well as gain positive benefits if they cooperate, no matter how difficult the current situation seems to be, based on the conviction that international relations are not a zero-sum game. On the contrary, there is great potential to maximise expected benefits.

Burchill clarifies that:

> Liberal institutionalists believe international relations need not to be a zero-sum game, as many states feel secure enough to maximise their own gains regardless of what occurs to others. Mutual benefits arising out of cooperation are possible because states are not always preoccupied with relative gains.[60]

Goodwin explains that 'competition should only arise when a shortage of resources prevents everyone being satisfied; likewise, cooperation should occur when it is in people's interests'.[61] More significantly, this cooperation, liberal institutionalists argue, does not require the existence of a hegemonic power that dictates and/or proposes various forms of cooperation. Cooperation could be 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical'.

Burchill indicates that:

> Liberal institutionalists seek to demonstrate that cooperation between states can be enhanced without the presence of a hegemonic player that can enforce compliance with agreements. For them, anarchy is mitigated by regimes and institutional cooperation that brings higher levels of regularity and predictability to international relations. Regimes constrain state behaviour [by] formalising the expectations of each party to an agreement where there is a shared interest.[62]

Consequently, they believe that peace should prevail in world politics; that war and/or violent or hostile attitudes among states can be mitigated.

Burchill concurs that:

> For liberals, peace is the normal state of affairs: in Kant's words, peace can be perpetual. The law of nature dictated harmony and cooperation between peoples. War is therefore both unnatural and irrational; it is an artificial contrivance and not a product of imperfect social relations or some peculiarity of human nature. Liberals have a belief in progress and the perfectibility of the human condition.[63]

The evolving relationship between NATO and its Middle Eastern partners has evolved in consistency with several core postulates of this theory. The selection of this approach can be justified in the light of the following:

1 The NATO dialogue process confirms the unity of mankind and enriches the ability of the parties concerned to accept to cooperate with each other (i.e. Arabs and Israelis as well as Arabs and Western countries) and to develop common understandings of security threats and the best ways of combating them. In other words, it helps overturn oft-prevailing attitudes of 'us against them'. Taking into account the long-standing hostility among the parties

concerned, the establishment of this process in such a negative atmosphere is a big achievement and confirms the utility of liberal institutionalist theory in understanding the unfolding relationship.

2 It uses the power of ideas to build the necessary confidence to pursue required cooperation in various fields, including the military as well as security domains. This is an unprecedented event in the region. While ideas of cooperation were presented and discussed in consecutive rounds of consultative meetings without reaching concrete results, especially in the first phase of the relationship (from 1994 to 9/11), fruitful results from these deliberations could be noticed in the second phase of NATO's role in the Middle East (from 9/11 to 2006). The following chapters show how these ideas of cooperation have been translated into cooperative programmes that are designed to address the most serious and pressing security threats in the region, being terrorism and weapons of mass destruction alongside other important security concerns.

3 Liberal institutionalist theory underlines the impact of individual perceptions on world security, which is why much of the ongoing process has been dedicated to training programmes that help address prejudices and misperceptions. The aim of conducting numerous training programmes for officials of competent authorities from NATO and its Middle Eastern partners is to change perceptions among concerned officials towards NATO and their partners, as well as with regards to other views on security matters. These training courses, which included cultural visits and social gatherings, were designed to help officials from various countries to socialise with one another. Consequently, rapprochement could become a positive characteristic in other aspects of the unfolding relationship. The high importance given to these activities was recognised, as the following chapters illustrate, by the 2006 Riga Summit that launched a new and fully fledged training initiative to serve this purpose.

4 Being an alliance of democratic states, NATO, as an institution, helps in alleviating suspicion and fostering cooperative activities between concerned parties. For some countries in the region, the Alliance became perceived with reassurance, rather than as a threat. In discussing the second case study (the NATO–Kuwait relationship), some vulnerable countries – particularly those located in the Gulf area – who had suffered from outside intervention, instantly welcomed NATO's endeavour in the region, based on the view that an alliance of democratic states could not swiftly or unpredictably change its friendly posture in the region. Likewise, some North African countries, especially Algeria and Morocco, considered their ongoing cooperation with NATO as a method of reinforcing their relationship with the West and as a catalyst to appease prevailing suspicions towards the region.

5 Among the main priorities of the NATO dialogue process is to make information available to each participant about NATO's policies and orientations. Equally important is that every partner has a chance to inform others about his own intentions, intelligence and policies. This two-way

street of dissemination of information is indispensable for building trust and is in full conformity with the core postulates of liberal institutionalism as explained above.

6 There is always room for advancement and evolution in the ongoing cooperation between various entities in the NATO dialogue process. In fact, one of the main principles governing the process since its inception in the mid-1990s is 'progressiveness', which allows the two parties – NATO and any of its Middle Eastern partners – to move faster on bilateral tracks, i.e. developing more advanced forms of their security relationship, without relating it to other tracks and/or the multilateral track that might witness delays given different regional or international circumstances.

7 Most significantly and indicatively, NATO's Middle East role, since its inception in 1994, has been evolving gradually in a friendly – or at least non-hostile – environment. The two-party relationship has never experienced insurmountable or even severe differences. Instead, one can notice that the two parties have been keen to maintain and protect this relationship away from the repercussions of long-standing regional problems, among which the Arab–Israeli conflict is prominent. Also, severe disagreements that erupted between NATO allies themselves (i.e. France, Germany and Belgium vis-à-vis the United States, which is the dominant and most influential ally) and between some major allies and Middle Eastern partners (i.e. the United States and Britain vis-à-vis Egypt and Jordan, etc.) over the 2003 Iraq crisis did not lead to negative repercussions for the unfolding relationship.

It appears evident that the two parties are confident that their cooperation, in its current form, is in line with their mutual benefits. Understanding this helps the researcher disaggregate the various aspects of the evolving relationship and also predict opportunities in the future. The empirical work conducted within the context of this research has run in parallel with the chosen theoretical framework of liberal institutionalism and confirms its accuracy and utility, as the following chapters reveal.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the picture is not wholly a rosy one. As this book discusses, surrounding circumstances have influenced the relationship, with NATO and the dialogue process as yet unable to fulfil some declared objectives.

Literature review

Before presenting an analytical review of the existing literature on NATO's role in the Middle East, one point has to be underlined. Much of the existing literature approaches this topic within the context of US or Western foreign policies towards the region. Put otherwise, NATO's role in the region is perceived by many scholars and experts as a tool that could be used either by the United States alone or by all allies together, to implement its or their vision for the region. Few contributions have covered the various aspects of standing ties between NATO and the Middle East.

NATO's fraught role in the Middle East

The growing relationship between NATO and the Middle East has been controversial and problematic for numerous reasons, among which are the nature of the North Atlantic Alliance as a Cold War institution and the long legacy of colonialism in the Middle East that still has its direct impact on politics today. Commenting on this, many scholars have recognised that NATO's Middle East role is emerging from an unfavourable atmosphere.

To start with, Calderbank identifies the difficulties that surrounded – and perhaps still do – the evolution of this relationship. She explains that launching NATO's role in the region was faced by suspicion and fear from the countries concerned, especially Egypt which was openly hostile. She ascribes this unwelcoming position to the effects of US policies in the region, particularly in Iraq, and the organisation's lack of understanding of the region, with all its complexities and sensitivities. She also notices that suspicion against NATO is prevailing not only in the Arab street but also among ruling elites.[64]

Neep underlines the same point that the negative perception of the United States across the Middle East is casting strong doubt on the possibility of developing NATO's role in the region, particularly the Mediterranean Dialogue. He argues that while Arab populations are not expected to overthrow those governments that maintain distinct relationships with the United States, it is also understandable that those governments are not able to ignore public opinion on each and every issue. This argument indicates that Arab governments, perhaps, have not yet found strong incentives to defy public opinion on this particular issue.[65]

Likewise, Blanford maintains that the situation in the Gulf is not different from the Mediterranean area, highlighting that overwhelming anger against the United States is spreading even in wealthy Gulf countries and generating suspicion against NATO's announced plans, despite the fact that the majority of Gulf countries' leaders approve of cooperating with the North Atlantic Alliance.[66]

What could be deduced from these insights is that NATO has been perceived to be a bulwark of US policies in the region. This belief, in one way or another, reflects and consolidates the assumption that NATO and the United States are two sides of the same coin. Adding to this, these insights underline that US foreign policy in the region is making more difficult the enhancement of NATO's regional role.

Importantly, not only does the problem rest with the United States or the impact of its policies. There is also a lack of confidence regarding the Alliance's real intentions in the region. In this respect, Shiyyab concurs that what hinders cooperative efforts between NATO and countries in the region is a long legacy of mistrust. He draws attention to the fact that many observers in the region fear that NATO could intervene forcibly at a regional level, as they think that the current cooperative mechanism that combines NATO and some Middle Eastern countries might constitute preparation for imposing conditions by force in the future. He concludes by arguing that 'Because the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region faces many uncertainties, it is vital that the dialogue succeeds. Serious

attempts should be made to reconcile a history of mistrust between the region and the West. The goals of the dialogue must be clearly defined to serve the needs of both sides'.[67]

Thus, the point that could be drawn from the above reviewed argument is that there is a fear, justifiable or not, that NATO's current endeavour might lead in the future to an interventionist policy that will certainly collide with the sovereignty and interests of NATO's supposed Middle Eastern partners.

In general, these contributions highlight that the intense political atmosphere in the region, including first and foremost the nature and impact of US foreign policy (for example, the 2003 invasion of Iraq), is the main cause that might hinder, or at least diminish, the possibility of building a positive and substantial relationship between NATO and some Middle Eastern countries.

Others believe that NATO's endeavour is doomed to inevitable failure not only because of the current political situation in the Middle East, but also for reason of insurmountable obstacles in the broader context, including the controversial relationship between Islam and the West.

For example, Ahrari warns that the potential involvement of NATO in the region might trigger conflict in a broader context, as extremism and radicalism in the region will inspire many that the West is determined to contain or subjugate Islam, 'something that Egypt and Saudi Arabia are already arguing, even though at a comparatively smaller scale'.[68] This tells us that the problematic and controversial relationship between Islam and the West has an impact on interactions between the region and the Western community, and NATO's role in the region is no exception in this respect. This might help us understand why the parties of the existing equation, i.e. NATO and its Middle Eastern partners, have always been keen to not subject the growing relationship between the two to public debate.

In addition, relationship building between NATO and the Middle East has been beset with internal or hereditary problems. Tanner notes that not only does NATO's role in the Middle East face local challenges, but even within the North Atlantic Alliance itself consensus with regards to NATO's role is difficult to achieve. He draws attention to what he describes as the 'systemic' problem of implicit rivalry between NATO states' national programmes with MD partners and NATO's current efforts to achieve a more significant cooperative agenda on its multilateral track. The point he seeks to underline is that NATO's member states have different perspectives with regards to the region, and sometimes it becomes difficult to reconcile all these various policies within NATO. Importantly, he argues that promotion of democratisation, which has become a global demand, requires a common alliance strategy and not just a few measures, as at present.[69]

In similar vein, Soweilam casts doubt on efforts to enhance the role of NATO in the Middle East region for two main reasons: US–European differences; and other challenges, risks and responsibilities that NATO is currently facing. He writes, 'Differences between the United States and the European Union are growing on all levels, not just over political concerns, trade and the environment, but also over strategic defence. The disputes plaguing NATO have a negative impact on

the Middle East'. Moreover, he adds, NATO is facing huge and various strategic challenges in the regions lying between Germany and Russia, Northern Europe, southward through Turkey, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia.[70]

The above arguments hint that cohesion is somewhat lacking in the allies' policies towards the region. Consequently, there is some difficulty in drawing precisely NATO's policies in the region, and further difficulties for NATO in implementing them. Further, it is clear that there are many security burdens bearing down on NATO, and that the Middle East, regardless of its global importance, is only one of them. Overloaded by various security concerns, it is perhaps open to question whether NATO has the requisite resources to tackle the Middle Eastern challenge.

NATO's role in the Middle East post-9/11

Whereas the above indicates the chronic problems and obstacles that in general surround the establishment of a NATO–Middle East relationship, others assert that the post-9/11 political environment both allows and necessitates NATO–Middle East engagement and even intervention. This notwithstanding, it is noticeable that there is a division of opinion regarding the scope of NATO's role in the region. While some advocate for a more serious role, others suggest that NATO is either irrelevant to current problems in the region, or should not exceed certain limits for fear that it becomes counter-productive.

Proponents of greater NATO involvement in Middle Eastern affairs

To start with, Cohen affirms the necessity of enlarging NATO's role in the Middle East by warning that 'Political instability and state failure in the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as in the Muslim states of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East, is another long-term systemic threat, which may endanger Europe and North America'. Then he recommends that NATO member states should develop workable strategies, based on shared threat assessments, to deal with major issues in the region, such as Iran, Iraq and terrorism. He also urges NATO to play a role in backing up the democratisation process in the region by spreading the Western notion of the civilian–military relationship, and to act as a venue in which Arabs and Israelis can meet in order to promote trust and understanding among themselves.[71]

Laipson underlines that NATO's new role in the region is and should be consistent with other international initiatives that are seeking to induce required changes in the region. He writes:

> NATO is picking up the pace of its engagement in the Middle East, putting aside any lingering doubts about 'out of area' missions. This new activism can contribute to regional stability and can add security sector reform to the reform agenda in the region. The new interest in the Middle East also represents NATO's desire to align its priorities with those of Washington, the G-8, the EU and other groupings that collectively represent Western power. It is

> the Bush Administration's energy for 'transforming' the Middle East that has persuaded NATO to move more actively into the sometimes-stormy waters of the Gulf.[72]

Heibourg asserts that 'It is absolutely vital to the success of the Greater Middle East Initiative that adequate international machinery be established. NATO can play a useful supporting role in terms of peacekeeping or security sector reform'.[73] In saying this, Heibourg, similar to the previous argument, claims that the 'Greater Middle East Initiative', launched by the United States, following the 2003 invasion of Iraq to address socio-economic problems in the region, needs to be complemented by NATO's contribution in the above-mentioned fields.

Meanwhile, Ruhle comments on NATO's increasing role in the region:

> NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue has been given more substance; the Alliance has begun to reach out to interested Gulf countries and it is training Iraqi security forces. The new training Initiative for the Middle East – an approach that could also be applied to Africa at a later stage – underlines the logic of adding value in areas where NATO possesses unrivalled expertise. Obviously, these outreach efforts must take into account the diversity of the region, as well as the widespread perception of NATO as a Western, US-dominated body.[74]

In the same vein, Rupp maintains, 'The Mediterranean Dialogue yielded modest results throughout the 1990s. In the aftermath of 9/11, however, many Alliance supporters called on NATO to further expand its presence in the region'.[75]

Similarly, Altenburg affirms that the current situation in the Middle East requires a more active role from NATO. He writes, 'NATO and the Middle East – the very combination of these two terms may still strike some observers as far-fetched, perhaps even frivolous. But the time to explore how NATO can make a real contribution to Middle Eastern security has clearly come'.[76]

These arguments also highlight that many advocates of NATO are calling for a more substantial role in the Middle East, despite the fact that its previous performance in the preceding period, from 1994 to 2001, did not bring about any significant contribution in enhancing stability and security in the region. This researcher believes that NATO's current role in the region is consolidating and complementing other international efforts, whereas the limits of its 'envisaged' role remain an area of contention.

Not all scholars agree. The review that follows might help illustrate that NATO's role in the region has been surrounded by uncertainty and/or ambiguity, especially with regards to enhancing regional security.

To start with, Cordesman indicates that irrespective of genesis of the 2003 war against Iraq, it is not in the interest of Europe to allow the defeat of the US-led coalition. That is why it is expected that NATO could play a role, if necessary, to defeat the insurgency there. He also argues that the limits of the envisaged NATO role with respect to defeating the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and the Arab–Israeli

conflict, as well as Islamic terrorism, should be well defined. He concludes by saying that:

> If the West only deals with the Greater Middle East in NATO security terms, the best it can hope for is a mix of containment, continued extremism, and occasional war. To eliminate terrorism or achieve energy security, the root causes of the region's problems must be addressed in as thorough and as practical a manner as any military mission.[77]

This argument, while it refers to the broad approach that NATO might follow in dealing with regional problems in the Middle East, hints that NATO's preparedness to deal with the region should include the possibility of coercion. As referred earlier, this might explain why there is some noticeable mistrust between NATO and its Middle Eastern partners. I intend to focus on this issue with a view to assessing and predicting the trajectory and nature of the future role of the Alliance in the region.

Gordon is among those who call for more engagement for NATO in the Middle East to tackle the challenges as well as seize the opportunities that have emerged post-9/11. He lists the measures taken by NATO to vitalise its Middle Eastern policy post-9/11, noting that NATO has:

> invoked its Article 5 defence clause for the first time ever, following the September 11 attacks in the United States; deployed a peacekeeping force of nearly 9,000 troops to Northern Afghanistan and committed to expand that mission geographically (to the south) and quantitatively (by another 6,000 troops); launched a 9 million euro training operation for Iraqi forces involving contributions from all 26 NATO members; created the NATO Response Force (NRF), a grouping of some 20,000 forces and equipment that can be called together at short notice and deployed anywhere around the world; deployed the NRF in an earthquake relief operation in Pakistan; established an air-bridge to supply soldiers from the African Union (AU) to a peacekeeping mission in Sudan; launched the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) to develop its political and military relations with members of the GCC; expanded its Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) to facilitate political dialogue with Middle Eastern countries including Egypt; enlarged the scope of political discussions in the North Atlantic Council to include briefings on a range of Middle Eastern and global issues; and established a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Response (CBRNR) team to help deal with possible weapons of mass destruction contingencies.[78]

Gordon indicates that many of these operations and measures are limited in scope and that political discussions about the Greater Middle East are still in their early stages. Nonetheless, he adds, 'the trend toward greater Alliance involvement in the region is clear and NATO's role in this area is likely to continue to grow'.[79]

Nolan and Hodge believe that regional realities necessitate that NATO intervene to reduce the intensity or contain the spill over of ethnic conflict as well as massive and gross human rights abuses.[80] They call for a further expansion of NATO's duties to include these 'new tasks', to protect Euro-Atlantic territories from their repercussions and ramifications, including massive immigration. As can be seen in Chapter 5, NATO has assumed such a supportive role in Darfur.

Differently, Vankeirsbilck clarifies that NATO's new approach to the Middle East is related to the risks emanating from the region, including, first and foremost, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, rogue states and the global fundamentalist terrorism.[81]

Vankeirsbilck clarifies that one of the most important and fruitful results of building a cooperative relationship with the Middle East is conveying NATO's expertise to its Middle Eastern partners. He adds that military cooperation that is being conducted within NATO's role in the region will not be limited to certain modest goals like increasing interoperability, but rather will also serve other long-term objectives, such as easing tension, dispelling misperceptions and promoting regional integration.[82]

Koch believes that NATO must have an auxiliary role to play in the region. He hints that enlarging the role of NATO to the Gulf area, as part of its new role in the Middle East region, means that NATO would shoulder part of the security burden and allow the Europeans to have a role in any security arrangements. However, he underlines that NATO cannot substitute for the indispensable role of the United States as the security provider in this highly important strategic area.[83] This argument can increase understanding about the internal interactions within the Alliance itself, between the United States and its European allies.

Ruhle goes beyond the current debate and suggests that NATO should develop a new form of 'partnership' with the region, tailored to its needs and requirements. However, if NATO, he further argues, wants to formulate a more visible role in the region in the longer term, more transatlantic understanding and agreement should be developed about the necessity and dimensions of NATO's regional role.[84] This argument indicates that even if NATO is pursuing, at the current stage, a cautious, gradual approach that is more concerned about confidence building and dispelling misperceptions, this will contribute positively in enhancing security in the region in the long run. More advanced forms of relationship, like partnership, are not excluded in the future.

Malmvig comments on NATO's hope to turn the Mediterranean Dialogue into a multilateral mechanism along the lines of the successful Partnership for Peace model, while adding that the possibility of such a outcome in the foreseeable future is slim. She suggests that MD should be, instead, strengthened and developed because MD states do not have the same positive perception of NATO as the states of the former Eastern bloc, and they are not ready for greater integration with the Western security alliance. She also clarifies that 'the 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 the difficult reform process'.[85]

Malmvig's argument highlights some important points, including the factors of mistrust and the effects of prevailing misperceptions, and that NATO, so far, has few incentives to persuade Mediterranean partners to deepen cooperation. However, two points must be borne in mind: first, there is a growing desire among some MD partners to widen the scope of cooperation, including high level cooperation on ministerial levels; and second, it is not true that NATO has few carrots. Instead NATO, as is shown in this book, can give significant assistance in this respect. So, turning MD into a general or specific partnership is not an unrealistic possibility.

Calderbank asserts that the potential of such a cooperative relationship is promising. She argues that the countries of the region are in need of NATO's huge expertise with regards to modernising their armed forces. Jordan and Algeria, she adds, have shown great interest in cooperating with NATO in this field. Moreover, some other countries like Egypt, Morocco and Jordan were willing to participate in NATO-led operations in the Balkans.[86]

However, Calderbank argues that the role of the Alliance should not exceed certain limits, otherwise it risks negative consequences:

> NATO's role in the region is most likely to be successful if it is limited and low-key. It is unlikely to be welcomed as a political organisation, trumpeting US-driven reform and seeking to impose a Western security agenda on the region. Suspicions regarding its intentions and confusion regarding its aims will not be dispelled simply through the public diplomacy campaigns that NATO is putting so much effort and money into.[87]

Dufourcq confirms that 'NATO's good neighbour policies, based on common security interests with its partners on the Southern flank, were not devised for dealing with problems originating in the adjacent areas of the Middle East and bore little relevance to their possible solution'.[88] Indeed, NATO's ability to intervene substantially in this complex security environment is weak.

Winrow warns against exaggerating the expected results of NATO's involvement in the region, predicting that it will neither resolve the region's long-standing problems nor settle all differences among participants. He adds, however, that the beneficial aspects of the MD process – like building confidence between the countries of the North and South as well as between the countries of the South themselves – should not be downplayed.[89]

He also mentions that:

> NATO's Mediterranean Initiative will most probably continue to develop incrementally. There will be no major dramatic breakthrough in relations between states north and south of the Mediterranean solely on account of the work of the NATO–Mediterranean dialogue. However, this dialogue is a useful CBM (confidence building measure) and an important tool of preventive diplomacy in the Euro-Mediterranean area.[90]

Altenburg maintains that 'While a NATO role in the Middle East is still a little bit in the "dream" category, there are other contributions that the Alliance can bring right now, in particular through our Mediterranean Dialogue process'.[91] He clarifies that NATO is trying to enrich practical cooperation in certain areas, such as the fight against terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, crisis management, defence reform and military-to-military cooperation.

Lugar suggests that NATO can help in containing the exploding conflicts of the Middle East by concentrating on helping militaries in the region with proper training and educations for certain fields, like peace missions, counter-terrorism, border security, defence reform, as well as civilian control of the military.[92]

Importantly, and contrary to the majority of assessments, Behnke argues that NATO bears hostile intentions towards the region. He mentions that there is a conviction in the West that the South is to be controlled and disciplined in order to prevent the spillage of its crises. He suggests, 'NATO's Mediterranean Initiative is a cornerstone in this rendition. For while we so far can not observe any direct military intervention by the Alliance in the Mediterranean region, NATO's discourse on the South in general, and the Initiative in particular, render it accessible and available for such action'.[93]

Behnke sees MD as a part of a pre-planned scenario to control the region. It is arguable, however, that this is inconsistent with the fact that Mediterranean Dialogue partners have been favourable, in varying degrees, towards positive engagement with NATO in this process and its wide-ranging activities. Also, mention could be made that nothing in this process, as the following chapters clarify, may pave the way towards achieving this possibility. Furthermore, there is no complete similarity between the policies of the United States and the European allies towards the region that might empower or enable NATO to do so.[94]

Finally, it is worth indicating that some analysts exaggerate the potential role of NATO in the Middle East region. For example, Fucks proposes that NATO grants membership to Israel to help the Hebrew state in reaching a final settlement with the Palestinians. He thinks that this kind of assurance obtained from NATO membership would encourage Israel, and some Arab states in a later stage, to move towards peace and democracy.[95]

This suggestion seems optimistic at least for the time being, bearing in mind it requires changing the 1949 Washington Treaty that stipulates in Article 10 that the geographic boundaries of the Alliance are limited to the Euro-Atlantic territories. In the meantime, it reveals that NATO's role in the region has produced a very wide spectrum of conflicting ideas and no consensus.

The overall view that could be drawn from all these wide ranging and inconsistent arguments is that the post-9/11 challenges do require more engagement of NATO in a very wide spectrum of issues ranging from the Arab–Israeli conflict and Iraq to human rights protection and terrorism, etc.; whereas the measures taken do so are very limited in scope and effects; and there is a severe contradiction about what should/or should not be done in this respect. To elaborate, whereas some of these arguments confirm that the development of the current relationship should be gradual and cautious, and call for more specific achievable

aims, rather than contemplating far too ambitious aims, others arguments urge for a more significant role of NATO in addressing all security threats. In all cases, what should determine whether or not NATO's role in the region has achieved some success is its given mandate as well as its relevance to various security issues, as the following parts of this research review.

Sceptics of enlarging NATO's role in the Middle East region

On the other hand, some experts argue that an expanded NATO role in the Middle East region is unnecessary, or at least ought not be other than auxiliary or supportive. Downplaying NATO's importance, not only in the Middle East but also in general terms, Rupp maintains that the new NATO has defined certain goals which are too difficult to achieve, and there is some evidence suggesting that even member states do not believe that NATO can serve as an indispensable vehicle to achieve the goals of their foreign policies. He even predicts that NATO's decline is becoming evident and will be self-perpetuating in the years ahead.[96]

Morgan mentions that 'NATO is being used in a highly creative fashion, along lines in keeping with its historical development, to bridge elements of several alternative models for regional security systems. This is of great interest on its own, but as of now it has little relevance for the Middle East'.[97]

These two arguments suggest that the role of NATO in the Middle East region might not be overly effective, or at least not overly significant, taking into consideration undeniable differences between NATO's past experience and its current endeavour in the Middle East. However, this view disregards the fact that the leaders of the 26 member states have authorised NATO, among its other highly important missions, to approach the Middle East. This trend has been frequently confirmed and emphasised in every summit since the 1994 Brussels Summit.

Spieget believes that no significant contribution towards the establishment of a new security regime in the area can be expected. He maintains that:

> Progress towards such a regime is extremely difficult without adequate domestic support and credible commitment by regional leaders. For example, NATO could not exist without a strong common calculation of interests, a supportive societal infrastructure, and leaders who are ready to cooperate. In the Middle East, these factors have never existed simultaneously, and all these have been often missing. They will not begin to exist until there is an end to Israeli–Palestinian violence and moves towards Arab–Israeli diplomatic progress.[98]

Spieget's view is consistent with other arguments indicating that NATO's role ought to be limited in order to avoid becoming entangled in a Middle East quagmire.

NATO: an American or transatlantic tool?

Some believe that NATO is an important tool that could be used by the transatlantic alliance, i.e. the United States and its European allies, to tackle Middle Eastern challenges, especially in the post-9/11 years.

Gordon indicates that irrespective of any current divergent views between Europe and the United States towards the prospective of NATO's role in the Middle East, both will have to strive together to achieve their interests in the region, especially through NATO which remains one of best reliable mechanisms for formulating policies and operations among allies.[99] Ruhle adds that it is noticeable that NATO's post-9/11 agenda reveals that a new transatlantic security partnership has been established in order to face new circumstances.[100]

Burns confirms that the main task of NATO, which is to defend Europe and North America, remains unchanged, but in doing so NATO has to give full attention to the Greater Middle East because, 'We have to deploy our conceptual attention and our military forces East and South. NATO's future, we believe, is in the East and South. It is in the Greater Middle East'.[101]

The International Institute of Strategic Studies comments that:

> NATO is also the right place to develop joint US–European power projection for the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf. The European NATO allies may not be ready to commit in advance to [the] power-projection initiative for the Middle East, but given the region's importance and the limited resources available for defence, it would be a mistake not to take advantage of NATO's capabilities and common interoperable armed forces and long history of military cooperation.[102]

Broadly speaking, these arguments confirm that there is a growing need to use NATO as a tool in dealing with the Middle East region. These scholars and experts are certain that the current challenges in the Middle East region, as well as transatlantic interests (i.e. shared interests between the United States and its European allies), are dictating that allies cooperate and harmonise their policies within NATO's mechanism to activate its role in the Middle East.

On the other hand, Shiyyab argues that NATO could not be anything other than a tool used by the United States in approaching the Middle East. He argues that MD concentrated mainly in the last decade on peacekeeping issues, arms control, small arms and light weapons, environment protection, civil emergency, crisis management and military cooperation. All these fields are enriching practical security cooperation that serves, in one way or another, the interests of the United States. However, he adds, it is evident that the whole process has yet to reach its full potential.[103]

Schweitzer holds that the United States has uncontested influence in determining NATO's policies; that NATO itself serves as a mechanism of shaping international views on the security objectives of the United States, and that 'While many member states participate in NATO deliberations, the United States has the loudest voice and, in fact, mainly leads NATO actions.[104]

Daalder, Gnesotto and Gordon indicate that Washington has started to urge its European allies to support its policy in the Middle East region, hinting that 'Starting in the late 1990s, the United States pressed its NATO allies to broaden their vision beyond Europe to other parts of the world'.[105]

As illustrated, the main point of these arguments is that NATO is an American tool, and its current role in the region is serving US interests, irrespective of the views of other allies. Allegedly, even if NATO's role is supposed to reflect the concurrence of allies' opinions, it remains, in reality, subject to US foreign policy, bearing in mind the huge influence of the United States on both NATO and the Middle East. What is missing in these contributions is the confirmation of whether or not NATO's role in the Middle East region is serving other allies' interests.

To sum up, the majority of arguments reviewed recognise that NATO's role in the Middle East region is fraught, given that the region is extremely sensitive to foreign intervention and is characterised by chronic and long-standing unresolved conflicts. As a result, many scholars underline the fact that NATO is perceived with suspicion, even by its Middle Eastern partners. Many argue that NATO must maintain a low profile in order not to elicit tension or hostile responses.

Most realise that NATO's endeavour in the Middle East region faces challenges on many fronts. First of all, there is no consensus, or even firm determination among the allies themselves, on the prospective role of the Alliance in the volatile Middle East region. Additionally, NATO, as a military alliance, has no significant contribution to make in solving the long-standing political problems of the Middle East.

On the other hand, some believe that NATO – especially in the post-9/11 era – is able to perform an important mission in support of other international initiatives that seek to incur desired change in the region. They indicate that the post-9/11 period has facilitated – and already witnessed – a more substantial role for the Alliance with regards to Middle Eastern affairs. Some believe, however, that it is premature to confirm such a change, given that the measures taken to extend NATO's role in the region have been limited and cautious.

Finally, several analysts underline that NATO's role in the Middle East is the result of an amalgamation of views between the two pillars of the North Atlantic Alliance in its broader context. They consider that European allies and the United States have come to understand that they need to coordinate policies with regards the Middle East; that one of the proper tools to be used to this end is NATO. Meanwhile, some indicate that NATO's role in the region, especially post-9/11, has become more 'American' centred. Put another way, NATO has become one of the foremost tools of US foreign policy in the region.

I argue that NATO has increased its role significantly in the post-9/11 years, by transforming its low-key relationship with its Middle Eastern partners to a more proactive formula that might help in enhancing regional security. This formula is different in nature and scope than what opponents and advocates for NATO's role in the region propose, as illustrated in the previously reviewed literature. To make it clearer, NATO's role is still confined to enhancing the abilities of its Middle Eastern partners to work together by conveying some of its expertise in various

fields, while it is still unable to make any significant contribution to the main contentious issues in the region. This role has come to back up and complement international initiatives, in spite of the continuity of negative circumstances that have surrounded the relationship since its inception.

I also wish to suggest that NATO's role in the region has become, to a certain extent, a vehicle for US policy in the region. More precisely, the United States can use NATO as a tool for its foreign policy in the region, but only as long as its interests and/or calculations run in parallel with other allies' interests. Otherwise, NATO's role could be crippled or marginalised. I do not agree with the views that perceive NATO's role in the region as either American or transatlantic 'oriented'. Factually, the matter is far more complicated and should not be categorised that way, given the fact that the United States has always enjoyed overwhelming influence in both the Middle East and NATO.

Book outline

The first substantive chapter covers the relevant issues of the Middle East. It starts by giving a definition of the concept of the Middle East, showing that the term 'Middle East' is more a political concept than a geographical entity. It then focuses on the strategic importance of the region – from a Western perspective in general and an American perspective in particular. The chapter tries to answer the question of why the Middle East has become the main area of concern of the Western world, especially in the post-9/11 era. An explanation is also given with regards to the reasons for the emergence of what is commonly called 'Islamic fundamentalism' or 'Islamic terrorism'.

In Chapter 2, an analytical review clarifies the nature and scope of the new global role of NATO. To reach this end, the chapter starts with a concise review of the transformation process NATO has undergone since the end of the Cold War. This review is limited to aspects of the transformation process that are linked, directly or indirectly, to the Middle Eastern dimension of NATO's overall strategy and its search for a new role.

Chapter 3 reviews and evaluates the relationship between NATO and select Mediterranean countries within the framework of the NATO–MD initiative, from its inception in 1994 until 2001 and the events of 9/11. Emphasis is given, in this chapter, to points of mutual concern and fears and misperceptions between NATO and Middle Eastern countries.

Chapter 4 focuses upon the development of the relationship between NATO and the Middle East region from 9/11 through to the 2006 Riga Summit. This covers the Enhanced Dialogue (MD) initiative and the proposals of cooperation (ICI) between NATO and Gulf countries. At this juncture, two case studies are examined thoroughly: the NATO–Egypt relationship in the context of the NATO–Mediterranean initiative (MD); and the NATO–Kuwait relationship in the context of the NATO–Gulf initiative (ICI).

Chapter 5 examines the correlation between US foreign policy in the Middle East region and NATO's role with regards to some Middle Eastern crises,

particularly Darfur and Iraq. The chapter starts with a review of the nature and determinates of US foreign policy towards the region post-9/11.

The main findings of this study are presented in the conclusion, which also includes my assessment and predictions.

1 Western interests and stability in the Middle East

After identifying the 'perceived' boundaries of the 'Middle East', according to the context of this study, this chapter highlights the reasons for the strategic importance of the Middle East from a Western perspective, before and after 9/11. It also reveals differences in perception between the United States and Western European countries – the twin pillars of the North Atlantic Alliance – with regards to the necessity of internal stability in the Middle East. Thereafter, focus is given to tracing the causes of instability in the Middle East region that has produced one of the most violent acts of terrorism in modern history. To reach this end, the chapter reviews recent international and regional studies that indicate a lack of proper development and adequate modernisation in the Middle East region.

The concept of the Middle East

Despite the fact that the Middle East region has been the main concern of recent world politics in general, and in the post-9/11 years in particular, the label of 'the Middle East' has not been given clear definition or its boundaries established. This ambiguity has increased, perhaps doubled, with the introduction of the concept of 'the Greater Middle East' coined simultaneously with the launching of the American initiative for the Middle East that is analysed and discussed in this chapter. What was understood, although not confirmed, by this concept is a vast area stretching from Afghanistan to Morocco, although the Middle East region is, undoubtedly, full of contradictions and diversity. Certainly, the only tie that can bind these countries is that the majority of their populations belong to Islam. Not surprisingly, the issue of defining the boundaries of the Middle East region, whether it is 'Greater' or not, has been open to debate in recent years.

To start with, the Encyclopaedia Britannica[1] defines the Middle East as 'The lands around the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, extending from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula and Iran and sometimes beyond. The central part of this general area was formerly called the Near East'.

Wikipedia[2] outlines that:

> The Middle East is a historical and political region of Africa and Euro-Asia with no clear boundaries. The term 'Middle East' was popularised around 1900

> in Britain, and has been criticised for its loose definition. The Middle East traditionally includes countries and regions in Southwest Asia and parts of North Africa. The history of the Middle East dates back to ancient times, and throughout its history the Middle East has been a major centre of world affairs.

Hansen clarifies that:

> The concept of the Middle East has undergone some changes. The former Soviet republics from Azerbaijan in the West to Tajikistan in the East have enlarged the sub-system; and Turkey in the northeast is becoming a much more active Middle Eastern power rather than in the bipolar period. On the other hand, the Maghreb states are strengthening their mutual relations as a group which disentangles itself from the Middle East in favour of Europe, especially the Mediterranean EU countries, and the Soviet attempt to include the Horn of Africa into Middle Eastern politics is history. The size and stretch of the political Middle East have changed.[3]

He further explains that 'Uni-polarity is not a static state of affairs, and the continuously changing sub-systemic relations of strength as well as the changes in the US agenda and priorities may have affects on pattern of conflict and cooperation, and issues in the Middle East'.[4]

Abi-Aad and Grenon define the Middle East as 'Stretching from Egypt to Iran and from Turkey to Yemen; specifically, this includes, in addition to these four border countries, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates'.[5]

Kamrava indicates that:

> [The Middle East] extends from Iran in the East to Turkey, Iraq, the Arabian peninsula, the Levant (Lebanon and Syria) and North Africa, including the Maghreb, in the west. Although, there are vast differences between and within the histories, cultures, traditions, and politics of each of these regions within the Middle East, equally important and compelling shared characteristics unify the region. By far the most important of these are language, ethnicity, and religion.[6]

Choueiri explains that:

> Initially, both the Near and Middle East tended to coincide geographically, embracing the core countries of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Greater Syria, Egypt, Sudan and Libya. With the passage of time and the emergence of the Arab world as a political block of states grouped under the umbrella of the Arab League, the designation widened to include North Africa as a whole.[7]

Hoddad indicates that:

> The term Middle East was designed by colonial powers. Its geographic reach has always been elastic and flexible determined by Western interests. In earlier times, it had included Iran, Turkey, and Cyprus, but the Greater Middle East had an even larger reach. To Islamists, its goal appears to be the eradication of Arab identity.[8]

This long-standing debate has become more complicated with the emergence of the concept of the 'Broader' or 'Greater' Middle East. Kemp and Harkavy define the 'Greater Middle East' as the region that includes four major conflicts: the Arab–Israeli conflict, conflict in the Persian Gulf, conflict in the Caspian Basin, and conflict in South Asia.[9]

Hubel and Kaim underline that:

> The concept of the 'Greater Middle East' might serve to better understand the implications of the old and new security externalities affecting states and relevant non-state actors in the political security space. This is to include the Near-East, encompassing the actors of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the Gulf region, defined by the precarious triangular power relationship between Iran, Iraq and the Arab states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Southern Caucasus as an emerging new region, characterised by common post-Soviet legacies and mutual conflicts and rivalries, Central Asia as a potential new region with common post-Soviet legacies and mutual rivalries, and south Asia, defined by the Indo-Pakistani conflict. In addition, there are now two major transnational security factors linking these regional security complexities and these are constituting a specific 'security–political' space: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and transnational terrorism inspired by political Islam.[10]

Fouskas and Gokay argue that:

> Broadly speaking, the 'Greater Middle East' project has been presented as an extension of trade benefits to a wider Middle Eastern area, programs of technology and know-how transfer, WTO involvement, financial incentives and assistance to small businesses and individuals (particularly women), legal aid, encouragement of an independent media initiative, and educational exchange programs. It is believed that this sort of activity will lead to the modernisation and democratisation of the Greater Middle East, which includes Turkey, Afghanistan and northeast Africa, but not Iran and Syria, and the eradication of terrorism from the region.[11]

Finally, Russell summaries the current debate, mentioning that 'The region of the world that encompasses the Middle East and South Asia is more easily captured by the concept of the Greater Middle East region, even if the concept is

debatable by geographers'.[12] He further explains, 'The Greater Middle East is arguably the most politically and militarily volatile of the world. The region is periodically swept with convulsions of war. The fallout from these conflicts affects the security of major states, Russia, China, and the United States that lie outside the region'.[13]

Within this context, it is noticeable that the terms 'Broader', 'Wider', or even 'Greater' Middle East have appeared in various statements and declarations issued by the successive summits of the North Atlantic Alliance. All these statements have carried a clear message confirming the utmost importance of the Middle East for calculations regarding the stability and security of Euro-Atlantic territories. Importantly, and perhaps interestingly, the North Atlantic Alliance itself does not propose a clear definition of what is meant exactly by 'the Middle East'.

In this regard, Bin in interview admits that:

> There have been standing differences between the allies about what should or should not be included in the Middle East region. That is why it was agreed to identify or decide about each case on its own merits and circumstances … whether or not it is 'Middle Eastern', according to the common consensus and understanding between the allies.[14]

Having reviewed all these arguments and definitions about the Middle East, the conclusion could be reached that there are various, perhaps contradicting, views about what is meant exactly by the term 'Middle East'. These differences about drawing its real or imaginary boundaries, with inclusion and/or exclusion of some countries according to political visions, confirm that the 'term' has long been politicised, especially post-9/11. The Middle East is no longer a mere geographical identity, but a political concept that encompasses various pressing security concerns. These security concerns are being identified or perceived by the great powers and they are still an area of contention. Understandably, NATO has preferred to use this term in an ambiguous formula in its recent documents, for instance, the declaration of the 2004 Istanbul Summit, to overcome or hide existing differences among allies.

This book holds the view that the Middle East region extends from Morocco in the West to the Gulf States in the East. More clearly, it encompasses the Arab countries and Israel. The reasoning is that NATO has shown, in practice, more interest in the Middle East region and these boundaries. After analysing its documents, one could recognise that the Middle East, in NATO's literature, includes three main areas: first, the group of South Mediterranean countries, or what is commonly known as North Africa countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania); second, the group that consists of Jordan, Israel and Egypt; and finally, the group that encompasses the Gulf areas. Sometimes Iran is included because of tensions regarding its nuclear programme and its possible repercussions for the region. However, as is clarified by this research, NATO has no role regarding this crisis, at least for the time being. Likewise, NATO's current role in Afghanistan is sometimes perceived as an integral part of NATO's involvement

in Middle Eastern affairs, although this mission is not connected, by any means, to NATO's current endeavour in this specific area, which is the main theme of this research, as is explained below.

What is more, it is noticeable that the majority of literature that has emerged in recent years on the Middle East has been focused on Arab countries. For example, Makiya writes, 'We must keep in mind that those attacks, i.e. the events of 9/11, were conceived and executed by Arabs, not by Afghans, Pakistanis, or Muslims in general. Arabs constitute less than 20 per cent of the world's Muslim population. Yet some would tar the whole Muslim world with the problems of its Arab components'.[15]

The argument of Makiya, who was among the proponents of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, shows how influential the hostile perception towards 'the Arab component' of the Muslim world has had its effects on the post-9/11 US policy, which is reviewed in Chapter 5.

Even if the 'new' Middle East means the Arab world, with the exception of the State of Israel, generalisation and ignoring the specificities of each country could be misleading. Factually, each country in the Middle East region has its own peculiarities, circumstances and calculations. Consequently, the national interest of one country may sometimes differ or contradict with the other's interests. In this regard, Halliday argues that:

> The Middle East is not unique in the incidence of dictatorship, or of states created by colonialism, or of conspiracy theory; but possibly in the content of the myths that are propagated about it, from within and without … The political, economic, social, cultural activities of the people of the region have their peculiarities and differences as much between each other as in terms of one Middle East contrasted with the outside world.[16]

Previously, the same scholar warned that generalisation about the region is more risky if it is linked to hopes, or anticipation, of a new era, advising that 'we should long ago have abandoned any temptation to see the region as a single political or socio-economic whole, etc'.[17] Rabasa also stresses that the Arab world is by no means monolithic, for example, 'Egyptian sensibilities, rooted in the tradition of one of the world's oldest civilisations, are very different from those forged in the austerity of the Arabian desert'.[18] Nonetheless, the prevailing trend in Western literature tends to consider the region as one entity.

The strategic importance of the Middle East

At the outset, mention should be made that the Middle East region is beset by historical rivalries, territorial disputes and difficult living conditions. As a consequence, complexity has always been the most distinctive and noticeable feature of Middle Eastern politics and a normal reflection of the intensity and severity of the socio-economic as well as cultural conditions of the region.

Traditionally, the West has always had distinctive policies, regardless of consistency, in dealing with the Middle East region and its chronic problems. The management of the region's security challenges was influenced, and frequently hampered, by intense global competition and rivalry between two poles, i.e. the United States and the former Soviet Union, during the Cold War. This was evident in the case of the Arab–Israeli conflict as well as other less important crises, such as the border tensions between Algeria and Morocco, Egypt and Libya, etc.

After the Cold War, the sole remaining superpower – the United States – faced no defiance to its hegemony, while it continued to favour 'relative' stability at any price. To clarify, this 'relative' stability means securing the durability of the status quo in most important Arab counties, i.e. the continuity of friendly regimes, and preservation of perceived 'peace' and/or the state of no war between Arab countries and the State of Israel.

Understandably, the stability of the Middle East region, which contains the largest reserves of energy sources worldwide, has long been one of the top priorities of the West, which wants to secure the flow of oil and natural gas. Contrary to periodically stated assertions, the importance of the region is and will be unchanged and incontestable at least in the foreseeable future.

Cordesman writes:

> After nearly three decades of intense effort to find commercially viable proven oil reserves outside the Middle East, current estimates indicate that the Middle Eastern and North African Arab states have between 68 per cent and 70 per cent of the world's reserves, and the Gulf alone has 65 per cent of the world's proven reserves.[19]

Another study by the same scholar suggests that 'The region has some 63 per cent of all the world's proven oil resources, and some 37 per cent of its gas; and in 2001 the Gulf alone had over 28 per cent of all of the world's oil production capacity, and the entire region had 34 per cent'.[20]

Furthermore, the International Energy Agency has estimated that the total conventional and non-conventional oil production is likely to increase from 77 million barrels per day (MMBD) in 2002 to 121.3 MMBD in 2030.[21] Cordesman explains that 'This is a total increase of 44.3 MMBD; and the Middle East will account for 30.7 MMBD, or 69 per cent of this total'.[22] It is understood that estimates differ, depending on sources and also on circumstances affecting some countries, such as war and civil unrest.

As far as the United States is concerned, the US Energy Information Agency (EIA) annual energy outlook for 2004 predicted that US dependence on imported oil would increase dramatically in the coming years. It stated that 'consumption would rise from 66.1 million barrels per day (MMBD) in 1990, and 76.9 MMBD in 2000, to 81.1 MMBD in 2005, 89.7 MMBD in 2010, 98.8 MMBD in 2015, 108.2 MMBD in 2020, and 118.8 MMBD in 2025. This means that there is an average annual increase of 1.8 per cent per year'.[23]

Added to this, it is well known that the US economy is primary among the group of international economies that rely, directly and indirectly, on importing Middle Eastern oil. This confirms that a certain level of stability in the Middle East region is imperative and indispensable for the overall health of the world economy in general, and the American economy in particular.

What has to be recognised is that there has been almost a complete similarity between the interests of Europe – meaning specifically the European allies – and the United States towards securing stability in the Middle East to meet common ends. This rapprochement of the allies' positions has been crystallised or incorporated in the clearest possible way in various NATO documents.[24]

But it would be wrong to confine the importance of the Middle East region only to issues and calculations of oil and stability. While both pillars of NATO, the United States and its European allies, have always had respective visions for the region, the United States has had more strategic interests than Europe in the Middle East region. This was evident in the post-Cold War period and has become more obvious in recent years. To elaborate, the United States, which has always enjoyed unquestionable and incontestable influence in the region through its distinctive relationships, sometimes described as strategic alliances with the ruling regimes of select key countries, has sought to control the region based on the conviction that it remains the centre of the world. In other words, the United States has always perceived the region, with its huge reserve of natural resources, as one of the key tools that could be used to maintain its unique status at the top of the international hierarchy. In doing so, it has always paid attention to controlling the many risks there, like combating terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, besides securing its biggest ally, Israel. Most recently, the notions of reform and democratisation have appeared among the US's priorities in the region.

Bensahel and Byman identify six vital and enduring interests for the United States in the Middle East. 'Countering terrorism, countering WMD (weapons of mass destruction) proliferation, maintaining stable oil supplies and prices, ensuring the stability of friendly regimes, ensuring Israel's security, and promoting democracy and human rights.'[25] Khouri suggests that the United States is facing four interlinked challenges in the Middle East, which are the situation in Iraq, the Arab–Israeli conflict, the war on terror with its related worries about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the broad reform strategy; and that 'all these dynamics and factors are in a state of flux'.[26]

In fact, the Europeans hold a similar view,[27] as is illustrated below, but two differences can be identified: first, that some European allies might disagree with the US vision on how best to achieve common goals; second, that they consider 'stability' as the first priority in drawing up their strategy towards the region, a priority which should not be compromised for the sake of attaining other remaining objectives.[28] To put it in another way, there are other influential factors that have always made some European allies more concerned and anxious than the United States about the issue of stability in the Middle East region. These factors are diverse and vary in importance.

First of all, the economic links between Europe and the Middle East are of greater significance than US trade and economic relations and ties with the region. Although Europe is a heavy consumer of Middle Eastern and Gulf oil, the overall trade balance is always in its favour. Without any sort of competition, the EU is the most important trade partner of the countries of North Africa and the Gulf.[29] Also, what cannot be ignored is the factor of geographical proximity that implies and facilitates inward migration to Europe. Currently, it is estimated that there are about 13 million Muslims in Europe, many of them of Middle Eastern origin.[30] This fact obliges some European allies to pay attention to the requirements of their internal cohesion by drawing up their policies towards the region in such a manner that does not encourage more migration, or cause unrest among already existing communities in their societies.

Ash writes:

> The domestic imperative also dictates the top foreign policy priority for Europe: supporting change for the better in our 'near abroad'; unless we bring more prosperity and freedom to young Arabs, even more young Arabs will come to us.[31]

Lugar also warns, 'Instability, poverty and joblessness normally increase the flow of migrants to Europe. What happens [in the Middle East] affects the parameters of social stability in the West; for example, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict causes unrest and discord among Europe's Muslim populations'.[32] This is a reason why Europe has been more cautious than the United States with regards to any radical changes in its traditional relations with the region.

As clarified, the main concern of the West is the Arab world, even taking the term 'Middle East' as an artificial concept. Therefore, more focus should be given to this specific region. The questions increasingly being asked are what went wrong and why has the current or newly identified Middle East been the main source of international terrorism?

The turbulent Middle East

For many decades, the Arab world has been suffering from political stagnation and continuously deteriorating socio-economic conditions. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of the peoples in the region have experienced endless crises of occupation, international injustice, unbearable poverty, ignorance, repression, illness, illiteracy, the severest violations of human rights and democratic norms and principles, as well as being torn by ideology and fundamentalism.

For example, Hanson warns that 'The Arab world has no consensual governments. Statism and tribalism hamper market economics and ensure stagnation. Sexual apartheid, Islamic fundamentalism, the absence of an independent judiciary and a censored press all do their part to ensure endemic poverty, rampant corruption and rising resentment among an exploding population'.[33]

Bodansky confirms that what he called the 'Arab/Muslim Middle East' has been radicalised and militarised at the dawn of the new century because of its indigenous dynamics, and 'as a consequence, hatred, violence, preparation for war and sponsorship of terrorism have become main features of its today's politics'.[34] This argument, while drawing a very dark picture of the region, fails to explain that violence, perceived by some as acts of terrorism and legitimate resistance by others, is a result of continued foreign occupation, in Iraq and Palestine, as well as internal and external forms of oppression.

Prior to this, some predicted the inevitability of intervention in the politics in the region. For example, Bill and Leiden indicated in the late 1970s that the region was in a high degree of flux because of the growing gap between modernisation and political developments, saying that:

> The appearance of new groups and classes, the need to continue and deepen economic and technological modernisation, the widening exposure to new and different ideas and political orientations, and the growing frustrations and sharpening expectations of the masses of Middle Eastern peoples all reveal that time is not on the side of the traditional political processes.[35]

Recently, it appears that globalisation, with all its socio-economic dynamics, is adding more troubles to Arab societies by igniting tension between various societal layers – i.e. between those who benefit and the deprived majority that remains unable to cope with the new rules of the game. No surprise that nostalgia for a glorious past has become shelter from an uncertain future.

Dodge indicates that even before 9/11, globalisation, with all its dynamics, has had a direct impact on countries already facing financial and political crises; consequently, unpopular regimes faced the revival of an Islamic opposition movement that gained support from deprived and frustrated societal layers.[36]

In general, although the Arab–Israeli conflict, which first erupted because of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and has continued until now, is the main cause of instability and insecurity in the region, there are other factors impinging upon its security and stability that need urgently to be addressed. The following review of the report of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (2005), and the reports of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the years 2003 and 2004, highlight the basic characteristics of the atmosphere in which Arab communities are living in the contemporary world.

To start with, the report[37] of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights for the year 2004–5 shows that:

1. Around 7.5 million children drop out of or leave schools and other educational institutions every year.
2. Although there has been an increase in governmental expenditure in the field of education, the illiteracy rate may reach around 46 per cent in Arab societies, especially among women.
3. The educational system that is offered to the poorer classes is characterised by poor quality.

4 The unemployment rate has soared to at least 20 per cent according to official estimates.
5 And at least 30 per cent of populations in urban areas live in slums or unplanned areas without proper services or infrastructure.

As for various political rights, indicators do not give, by any means, an optimistic outlook. The Arab Organisation for Human Rights report, while it acknowledges some positive developments, like ratifying some international human rights conventions and conducting trials for those suspected of being involved in crimes of torture, indicates that there has been an increase in violations of the rights of life and personal security. It highlights that more political activists were detained, in addition to the continued suppression of opponents and reformists in a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria and Egypt.

Furthermore, the report draws a very dark picture of the future when underlining the failure of efforts to combat poverty (that is still on the increase), coupled with the lack of appropriate food, increasing birth rates, and the intolerable increase in the cost of basic goods and services and various commodities. What makes the situation worse is that the majority of Arab countries fall below acceptable levels in terms of water resource access.

Most importantly, the report expresses deep concern about severe violations of the right of life in Arab societies. For example:

> About 100,000 civilians were killed since the inception of occupation in Iraq, 4,000 were killed since the beginning of 'Intifada', or uprising, in September 2000, an unknown number of victims in Darfur, and 300,000 victims in the Somali civil war since 1991.[38]

It goes without saying that this bloody atmosphere must have a deep impact on those who have grown up with it. Inevitably, it increases their hostile attitudes towards those who are responsible for their humiliation and suffering.

Likewise, the 2003[39] and 2004 UNDP Arab Human Development reports give a comprehensive diagnosis of the harsh conditions of life in the Arab world. The 2004 report[40] notes that 'the Arab world finds itself at historical crossroads; caught between oppression at home and violation from abroad, Arabs are increasingly excluded from determining their own future'.[41] The report also confirms that 'the Arab world is at a decisive point that does not admit compromise or complacency'.[42]

Symbolically, and perhaps interestingly, the expression of the 'black hole state' was coined by this report to give a clear description of the real status of Arab countries. It notes that 'The modern Arab state, in the political sense, runs close to this astronomical model, whereby the excessive apparatus resembles a black hole which converts its surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes'.[43]

Obviously, this is indicative of the maximum concentration of power that has led to complete stagnation and repression in almost every field. But this status

does not mean the inviolability of the present regimes. Instead, it is irrefutable evidence of their weakness and inability to cope with the aspirations of their peoples. Ayubi observes that 'the Arab state is an authoritarian state, and that it is so averse to democracy and resistant to its pressure should not, of course, be taken as a measure of the strength of the state – indeed, quite the reverse'.[44] Bubolo argues that Middle East regimes are stagnant, and that while they are not able to face the challenge of various types of reform, they are practiced at and concerned about their continuity and survival.[45]

Broadly speaking, the 2004 report indicates that in spite of some embryonic political and social mobility, the Arab world is still lagging behind the rest of the world with respect to applying the international standards of human rights and democratic rules of governing. Explicitly, it states that 'of all the impediments to an Arab renaissance, political restrictions on human development are the most stubborn'.[46] The report also highlights the undeniable fact that the rights and freedoms that Arabs enjoy remain poor because of the practices of undemocratic regimes along with tradition and tribalism.[47]

Most significantly, the report clarifies that international and internal reform initiatives are being undermined by three factors: the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel, the US-led occupation of Iraq and the escalation of the war on terrorism.[48]

Over and above this, the two UNDP reports highlight the curtailment of freedoms, the weakness of the judicial system, women's suffering from inequality and vulnerability, the abuse of minority rights, structural economic and political corruption and the prevalence of emergency law. The following indicators give a more detailed picture.[49]

First, the results of a study of 15 Arab countries found that 32 million people suffer from malnutrition, nearly 12 per cent of the population of these countries.

Second, only 14 countries allowed the establishment of political parties; press freedoms in 11 Arab countries can be blocked or curtailed by regulations; and journalists' rights to obtain information is assured in law in only five countries.

Third, the spread of education is restricted by the prevalence of high rates of illiteracy (almost one third of Arab men and half of Arab women are illiterate). Besides the declining quality of Arab education, Arabs lack sufficient access to mass media, which is the main method of diffusing knowledge. For example, there are fewer than 53 newspapers per 1,000 Arab citizens compared to 285 papers per 1,000 in developed countries. Also, the infrastructure of communication is still below international rates: for example, the number of telephone lines in Arab countries is barely one fifth of that in developed countries; and Arab access to digital media and different sources of culture is among the lowest in the world, with only 18 computers per 1,000 people in the region compared to the global average of 78.3 per 1,000 people elsewhere, with only 1.6 per cent of the population having internet access.

Further, only 4.4 translated books per million people were published in the first five years of the 1980s (less than one book for one million people per year); while the corresponding rate in Hungary was 519 books per one million people

and in Spain 920 books; the number of published books in the Arab world does not exceed 1.1 per cent of the world production, whereas Arabs constitute five per cent of the world population. Added to this, the number of scientists and engineers is not more than 371 per million citizens; whereas the global rate reaches 979 per million. Moreover, expenditure on research does not exceed 0.2 per cent of GNP. Brain drain is an undeniable phenomenon and doubtless contributes to further socio-economic deterioration in the region (as it was reported that about 25 per cent of 300,000 first degree graduates from universities in 1995–6 emigrated).

Fourth, the Arab countries have failed to become attractive for foreign investment (none of them figures among the top ten FDI-attracting countries in the developing world). What is more, a vast amount of Arab capital is being invested in the industrial countries, i.e. denied to the Arab world.

Finally, the 2004 report considers the governmental and societal steps exerted to improve living conditions as embryonic and fragmentary, falling short of serious efforts to dispel the prevailing environment of repression.[50] Further, the situation is predicted to get worse in coming years as a result of unregulated birth rates. Cordesman warns of the effects of demographic explosion in the Middle East on world stability, saying:

> The total population of the Middle East and North Africa has grown from 78.6 million in 1950 to 307.1 million in 2000. Conservative projections put it at 376.2 million in 2010, 522.3 million in 2030 and 656.3 million in 2050. This growth will exhaust natural water supplies, force permanent dependence on foreign imports and raise the size of the young working age population (15 to 30 year olds) from 20.5 million in 1950 to 145.2 million in 2050. With over 40 per cent of the region's population now 14 years or younger, there will be an immense wave of future strain on the social, educational, political and economic systems.[51]

Russell also highlights that:

> The region's population is expected to be more than double by 2050, to reach 649 million. Saudi Arabia and Yemen are expected to grow almost fourfold by 2050, from 24 to 91 million, and from 19 to 91 million respectively. Egypt and Iran are predicted to have populations of over 100 million in 2050.[52]

Logically, this demographic pressure is worsening already deteriorating living conditions in many Arab countries and feeding, either directly or indirectly, the general feeling of despair.

Furthermore, Richards underlines that:

> The fanaticism of radical Islamists is nourished by the deep despair of huge numbers of young Middle Easterners, two-thirds of whom are below the age of 30, half of whom are younger than 20, and 40 per cent of whom have yet to reach their fifteenth birthday. There are 150 million people from Morocco

> to Iran who are younger than 20. Fifteen years from now, another 100 million are likely to be born. Middle Easterners increasingly means younger people.[53]

Simply put, this trend hints that the Middle East region is headed for complications in the coming decade unless serious efforts are made urgently to address its chronic problems.

Given all these alarming facts, it is now opportune to shed light on the causes that lie behind this 'disastrous' environment that can breed terrorism and extremism. First of all, it would be in some way naive to limit the causes of backwardness and extremism to the absence of democracy. Simply, this is because some undemocratic countries have developed rapidly, for example in Asia or elsewhere. Also, extremism that might result in terrorism has proved to be a trans-border phenomenon that is not related or linked to any religion or specific geographical area. Suffice it to refer to deadly incidents that occurred in Japan and India, as well as in the United States itself, that were committed by home-based groups.

Certainly, the neo-conservative administration in Washington tends to oversimplify the problem when it pretends that it is the inevitable direct result of the deterioration of socio-economic conditions, coupled with the nature of religious ideology, as well as the absence of democracy and practices of autocratic or despotic regimes. If this were partly right, it is still insufficient as an explanation.

Analysing the realities on the ground may show that the plight of the Middle East is the inevitable result of the complexity of its circumstances, in which many internal and external factors have been intertwined.

First, the effects of the culture of 'repeated war' have been reflected in almost every aspect of life. Owen underlines the deep impact of the cycle of repeated wars on the people of the Middle East, asserting that:

> This was enough to create a situation in which not just wars themselves but also the cumulative effects of the memory of past wars and the ever present threat of new ones became important factors in their own right, influencing policy and the distribution of national resources in ways that had profound effects on political institutions, economic and social arrangements, and the general exercise of power.[54]

Almost certainly, the deep sense of vulnerability towards other regional and international enemies has hampered the normal evolution of Middle East societies. Owen gives further explanation, saying 'it was perhaps inevitable that the goals of national security, self-defence and rapid industrialisation should take precedence over those of political pluralism and individual rights'.[55]

Furthermore, US policies towards the region, especially in Palestine and Iraq, should be counted as one of the main reasons igniting hatred and extremism in the region and hampering developmental efforts in a significant manner. Downing argues that because the Islamic fundamentalists want to put an end to the 50 years of US military interventions, political interferences in and

economic control of the Middle East, they see terrorism as the only available option to fight the United States. For them, he adds, 9/11 was a blow against their oppressors.[56] He also adds that although terrorism is not confined to the Middle East, the most important terrorist groups exist there; that these groups strongly believe in a continued Western conspiracy against a region that is unable to live up to its glorious past.[57]

Second, while not sufficient as an explanation, the absence or lack of democracy as a basis for governing Middle Eastern countries is certainly a factor in their present condition. Winstone writes:

> Power in most Middle Eastern countries had by the end of the twentieth century been largely unaffected by the concept and practice of parliamentary democracy and accountability. These countries with huge oil and gas assets, moreover, had used the wealth that these assets brought them to maintain a paternalistic form of government in which the values of liberty and human rights were subordinated to different historical, tribal and other traditions.[58]

The American vision on this issue seems to ring true, because lacking democracy contributes, normally, to increasing corruption, bad governance and disrespect for the rule of law. It should be mentioned that the 2004 UNDP report rules out the allegation that cultural factors – meaning the influence and nature of Islam – prevent democracy building. Instead, it ascribes the absence of democracy to 'The convergence of political, social and economic structures that have suppressed or eliminated organised social and political actors capable of turning the crisis of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes to their advantage, besides the region-specific complexities'.[59]

These region-specific complexities, which the previous argument underlined, have had their impact on almost every aspect of life and are entrenching backwardness which breeds extremist thoughts.

Hudson underlines such complexity, indicating the following five domains:

> (1) The cultural domain, where communal identities are in flux as never before, fuelled by globalisation trends and new information technology; (2) the economic domain, in which globalisation – the commercial, financial, and technological flows centered on the advanced economies – relegates the Middle East region to deepened dependency, while neoclassical development strategies deepen inequalities and social tension; (3) the structural domain, in which the pre-eminence of states is challenged by societal and transnational structures; (4) the power domain, where terrorism and the proliferation of certain weapons of mass destruction dramatically alter the traditional conceptions of 'balance of power'; (5) above all the American domain, because America's global hegemony appears to be beyond challenge by any states or combination of states.[60]

Third, doubtless the role of the United States in supporting the stability of friendly regimes, at any price, is also a decisive factor in adding turbulence to an already tense Middle East region. Lesch confirms that the United States protected its interests in the region in the past 50 years by dealing, very often, with illegitimate regimes and has continued to do so, 'although the fragility of those regimes is a reality over which the United States has very little influence'.[61] Hawthore argues that there has been a constant contradiction between US principles like freedom and democracy and US interests in the Arab world, including, first and foremost, stability. At the end of the day, US policy towards the region has been characterised by cold, realpolitik policies, favouring interests over other considerations.[62]

Fourth, what should not be forgotten is the perception of some 'Islamic factions' towards some Western – particularly American – policies in the region. For example, the existence of US forces in the Arabian Peninsula is one of the main grievances used by Osama Bin Laden to rally support for his call for action. Bennis asserts:

> The suicide hijackers of September 11 were apparently recruited in Pakistan, coached in Afghanistan, organised in Hamburg and trained in Florida and the American Midwest. But change in the Arab Middle East was their primary purpose. For Osama Bin Laden, the key *raison d'etre* for his Al-Qaeda had always been to purify Saudi Arabia of its corrupt and insufficiently Islamic monarchy – which meant first ridding the Kingdom of the polluting presence of US troops who protected the royal family.[63]

Also, Anderson argues that:

> The Osama Bin Laden phenomenon did not originate with the Arab–Israeli dispute, although he did attempt to link with it in much of his rhetoric. The roots of this dispute go far back. Seeds of discontent were sown by bitter memories of the crusaders; by resentment of colonial occupation by Britain and France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; by relative poverty of many compared with Western riches; by perception of authoritarian and corrupt regimes linked with the morally decadent West; and by fear of modernity in the traditional society in the region.[64]

In his famous 1999 press statement, Osama Bin Laden asserts that 'The people of Islam awakened and realised that they are the main target for the aggression of the Zionist-Crusaders alliance. We shall continue our Jihad to liberate the Islamic land'.[65]

Importantly, the terrorist actions committed by Middle Eastern and/or Arab individuals – specifically the 9/11 events – have been considered rather different from previous acts of terrorism. Specifically, Middle Eastern terrorism is said to be different because of its nature, extent and tactics. For example, Perliger maintains that what distinguishes the Middle East form of terrorism are the following: it has become a dominant tool for attaining political and social objectives; it has

not limited its movements and actions to the geographic area of the Middle East, contrary to European and Latin America forms of terrorism; it has developed new methods and lethal tactics.[66] Satloff indicates that 'the region is a home to organisations that share both ideology and methodology with the perpetrators of September 11, and to state sponsors of such groups of "global reach"'.[67]

On the other hand, the current wave of 'Middle Eastern' terrorism cannot be separated from the role of some Middle Eastern and Western countries in fuelling Islamic resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Chomsky indicates that:

> 'Blowback' from the radical Islamic forces organised, armed and trained by the US, Egypt, France, Pakistan, and others, began almost at once, with the 1981 assassination of President Sadat of Egypt, one of the most enthusiastic of the creators of the forces assembled to fight a holy war against the Russians. The violence has been continuing since without letup.[68]

To be sure, there is no specific reason behind the disastrous situation in the Middle East region that constantly breads extremism, but rather a number of intertwined factors, varying in importance and effect, that cannot be separated from each other.

Zunes believes:

> Those challenging the neo-liberal model of globalisation can observe how the growing economic stratification in the Middle East and the declining access by the region's poor majority to basic needs resulting from such policies has contributed to the rise of extremist groups. Human rights campaigners can note the tendency of Islamic terrorists to emerge in countries where open and non-violent political expression is suppressed. Peace activists can emphasise how the arms trade has contributed to the militarisation of the region and the resulting propensity for violence.[69]

Likewise, Heazle and Islam argue that the complexities of past and current circumstances in the Middle East, such as colonial occupation, failure of nationalist aspirations, poverty and current Western interventions, have produced two parallel outcomes: transnational terrorism and the perception of Islam as a possible vehicle for achieving the aspirations that current secular regimes failed to achieve.[70]

Likewise, Ullman clarifies that the extent of danger that is being fuelled by hatred is stretching from the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict to the Bay of Bengal and South Asia's India–Pakistan rivalry, and that 'political enmities and grievances have been super-charged by the impact of globalisation, the reach of modern technology, and the fanatical perversion of religion directed towards violence, terror and destruction'.[71]

Seemingly, the situation is prone to further escalation. Richards raises the most alarming point when mentioning that 'political Islam' is gaining control in the Middle East region as a result of inevitable change or collapse of secular regimes in countries like Egypt and Syria, and that 'It remains unclear whether Islamists across

the Diaspora will adopt the intellectual and ideological radicalism articulated by Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri or some other moderate frames'.[72]

What makes the situation even more dangerous is that the Middle East is thought to be one of the most armed regions in the world. From a Western perspective, the region is full of various kinds of weaponry, including weapons of mass destruction.

Cordesman reports:

> In spite of international arms control efforts, and various discussions of weapons of mass destruction-free zones in the Middle East, the major powers in the region clearly see chemical, biological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons as key instruments of power. The same is true of long-range delivery systems, such as missiles.[73]

He then discloses that some countries have reached certain knowledge about, or already possess, some of these deadly weapons. The main points of his study can be summarised as follows:

- *Algeria:* Some development of chemical and biological weapons technology. Has considered a nuclear weapons programme. Has examined options to obtain long-range missiles.
- *Libya:* Has major production facilities for chemical weapons, but only limited actual production. Has sought to obtain biological weapons technology with limited success. Has attempted a nuclear weapons programme, but continuing efforts have had little success. Has significant stocks of FROGSs and Scud Bs and has attempted to buy or produce longer-range missiles.
- *Egypt:* Has preserved some chemical warfare capability. Seems to have developed biological weapons, but has not produced, stockpiled or weaponised them. Its nuclear weapons programme is a failure and has long been dormant. Has Scud missiles and is seeking to create extended range Scud missiles similar to North Korean designs. Has sought to develop longer-range missiles in the past.
- *Syria:* Has mustard gas and several varieties of nerve agents. These are stockpiled in bombs and missile warheads and possibly artillery weapons. Has an extensive biological research programme. Should be on the edge of weaponising biological agents and may already have some weapons. Has an extensive stock of Scud Bs and longer-range North Korean missiles.
- *Saudi Arabia:* It does not have weapons of mass destruction. It did, however, buy long-range CSS-2 ballistic missiles from China.
- *Israel:* Has developed chemical and biological weapons and the ability to weaponise them, but does not seem to have produced them. Has never publicly announced its possession of nuclear weapons and relies on an 'undeclared deterrent'. Israel has an extensive nuclear stockpile, probably including boosted and fusion weapons, and some low-yield 'theatre nuclear weapons'. Has satellite capability for long-range nuclear targeting. Can

> deliver nuclear weapons with long-range ballistic missiles that can hit any target in the Middle East, and with refuelable, long-range, strike aircraft.[74]

Cordesman ascribes this prevailing trend in the Middle East to many factors, including: the desire of exiting regimes to gain prestige; the need to deter expected hostilities; regional competition; fear of the United States as well as other big powers that have interests in the region; the inability of states to trust the international system of arms control; and the belief that weapons of mass destruction proliferation is a wise alternative to far more expensive investments in conventional forces.[75]

Another confirmation comes from the report of the Congressional Research Service to Congress in 2000. It starts by indicating that:

> The Middle East has long been one of the most heavily armed regions of the world. It now has achieved one of the highest concentrations of countries with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons and missile delivery systems. If the current trends continue, in the coming decade additional countries in the region will obtain WMD and missiles, they will expand their WMD arsenals, and will increase the lethality of their WMD.[76]

It further brought to attention that 'Terrorist groups, some of which are allies with countries, are also reportedly attempting to acquire chemical, biological, or even radiological weapons'.[77]

Furthermore, the 2005–6 report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies reveals that some Middle Eastern countries have considerably advanced conventional forces. For example, it reveals that 'Egypt has a large army consisting of 468,500 troops, including 340,000 in ground forces, 18,500 in the navy, 30,000 in the army, and 80,000 for air defence. It also has reserve forces that reach 479,000 soldiers, plus 330,000 paramilitary forces'.[78] The report also shows that Israel has got 168,300 soldiers and 408,000 in reserve forces.[79]

International Middle East initiatives in the post-9/11 era

Undeniably, the events of 11 September led to a new view of the region and its contradictions, complexities and problems. In a nutshell, the 9/11 attacks brought the region into clearer focus. Indeed, it can be argued, 'everything changed',[80] including the attitudes of the United States, Europe and NATO towards the Middle East. The region has become the main concern of the world community; consequently a number of initiatives were launched to address its chronic problems. Before reviewing these initiatives, mention must be made that NATO is most concerned with these initiatives, expressing its support for them. The secretary general himself stated that:

> NATO is in favour of a Greater Middle East initiative – I should say initiatives, because there are, of course, more than one … where NATO would

> have added value … I look at the Greater Middle East initiatives from a very positive angle, underlining the fact and stressing that, of course, there should be ownership in the region, in the sense that I would like to know what the countries in the region want.[81]

The core of these initiatives is to achieve democracy and reform based on the view it is the best way to uproot terrorism, while, at the same time, preserving stability or status quo, as perceived in the Western world. Therefore, it is highly important to discuss the matter in details in order to trace the evolution of American and Western thoughts in this respect. This will help to understand the limits of the current role of NATO with regards to those issues that are discussed henceforth.

Stability vis-à-vis reform (the cases of Egypt and Saudi Arabia)

In the post-9/11 era, the United States and some of its allies have acknowledged that if they wish to defend themselves against terrorism at a time when weapons of mass destruction proliferate, and weapons technology is widely available, they have little choice but to anticipate threats and move to eliminate them. In other words, there is no point in addressing the phenomenon of terrorism as long as the leaders of extremism find sanctuary in failed or failing states, in unresolved regional conflicts and in the misery of endemic poverty and despair.

Against such a background, it can be realised how big the shock was when the West, mainly the United States, began to develop an awareness that its policies towards the Middle East region – that favoured stability over any other objective – had led to catastrophic consequences. Justifiably, the West, particularly the United States, has begun to understand that it urgently needs to revise or reconsider its long-standing policies towards the region. One cannot underestimate the impact of the cultural or psychological shock of these events, as well as the symptoms of Islamophobia which appear to inform, in one way or another, the way the West views the region.[82]

For example, in his speech at the National Endowment for Democracy on 6 October 2005, former President Bush spelled out what he thought to be the three main goals of terrorists as follows: to end US and Western influence in the Broader Middle East; to use the vacuum created by an American retreat from the region to gain control of a country to use as a base from which to launch attacks against non-radical Muslim governments; and to control one country in order to rally 'Muslim masses' to overthrow all moderate governments in the region and establish a radical Islamic empire from Spain to Indonesia.[83] Given this belief in the threat posed by an 'Islamic empire', one can understand why the United States has persistently been seeking to block such potential dangers emerging from the region, no matter how great the consequences. Consistent with this perception, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, after the '7/7' suicide terrorist attacks in London, ascribed the emergence of these deadly ideas of terrorism to the practices of despotic regimes in the Middle East region.[84]

Consequently, the issue of reform and stability in the Middle East has emerged as one of the main priorities of the Western world. This issue is reviewed in detail with special focus paid to two main Middle East countries: Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

These two countries in particular were gravely affected by the events of 9/11. The 19 terrorists who allegedly launched the deadly attacks that wounded the United States were Muslims and Arabs, mainly Saudis led by an Egyptian. Indeed, we may recall that the defining point in the evolution of Bin Laden's terrorist group, Al-Qaeda, was its amalgamation with a faction of the Egyptian Jihad group in the late 1990s. One of the most prominent contemporary extremist thinkers, Ayman El Zawahari, through his alliance with Bin Laden, was afforded opportunity to spread his thoughts and turn them into action. Thus, 9/11 was a direct challenge also to Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Anderson writes, 'The Bin Laden challenge really appears to have been aimed at the Saudi and Egyptian governments, and at the United States for its support of those governments'.[85]

Not surprisingly, the two countries, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which are, on most counts, the biggest and most influential countries in the Arab world and the Middle East in terms of wealth, population, manpower, capabilities, historical influence and moral weight, have become the main focus of US criticism post-9/11 after having been, for many years, the most favoured and important regional allies besides Israel to the United States.

The regimes of the two countries were – and still are – the cornerstone of American policy towards the region, always seeking to secure the flow of oil and achieve stability and peace in the region. Egypt, which receives a huge amount of US aid annually – the second largest amount of aid after Israel, about $2–3 billion – has been, and still is, seen as a moderate country able to secure peace and stability in the Middle East. Its regime, which is described by some[86] as autocratic and undemocratic, stands as a steadfast barrier against the coming to power of Islamists that can rally opposition to, and resistance against, Western policies and interests in the region.

Similarly, a number of factors have contributed to the unique status of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; first and foremost, the fact that it possesses the largest reserves of oil worldwide.[87] Arguably, the performance of its regime, as well as orientation and religious doctrine, is indistinguishable from fundamentalism. Not only this, but also frequent doubts have been raised about the hidden connections between some figures of the Saudi regime and certain terrorist groups.

Chomsky writes that 'In the Islamic world, the most extreme fundamentalist state, apart from the Taliban, is Saudi Arabia, a US client state since its origins; the Taliban are in fact an offshoot of the Saudi version of Islam'.[88]

Landau concurs, noting:

> Although the terrorists appeared to have their headquarters, funding and religious roots in Saudi Arabia, the US government destroyed their infrastructure by bombing Afghanistan, the place where their key banker, Bin

> Laden, temporarily resided and had some temporary training camps. Indeed, reliable public sources show that Saudi Arabia even financed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and provided it with military support as well.[89]

However, the importance of Saudi oil and money and its regional and spiritual roles in the Gulf and Islamic world had always surpassed any criticism in decision-making circles in Washington. To put it bluntly, American keenness to achieve the 'tranquilisation strategy' towards the Middle East region dictated that successive US administrations should turn a blind eye towards the undemocratic or theocratic/fundamentalist orientations of Egypt and Saudi Arabia for the sake of keeping its strategic alliance with these two key countries.

But the events of 9/11 necessitated a rethinking. All of a sudden, the United States was awoken by the alarming fact that the socio-economic and political conditions of these two countries had resulted in the kind of extremist ideas that might explode world peace and security, either with or without the continuation of the existence of these regimes. More clearly, the Americans have recognised that in spite of the distinctiveness of their relations with the two countries, both have contributed significantly to the breeding of terrorism and increasing the severity and frequency of its atrocities.

In addition, the post-9/11 United States sees the world in conformity with Bush's rule, 'Either you are with us or against us'.[90] In contrast to their policies in the first Iraq war in 1991, Egypt and Saudi Arabia did not present the 'expected' support or assistance for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Instead, the two regimes responded positively, to some extent, to popular anger and chose to declare their opposition to the war, and coordinated the Arab position, through the Arab League, to back up the German–French axis, by declaring Arab condemnation of the invasion of Iraq. Again, the US administration, or at least some of its influential figures, like Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor at that time, realised that it could not rely on the two regimes, as it had before, in its giant project for change in the Middle East without putting more pressure on them.

What makes the task of US policy drafters more difficult is the traditional 'Western' fear of the possibility of a sudden collapse of long-standing regimes in these two countries by unexpected popular turmoil, triggered by either the continued deterioration of the socio-economic conditions, or organised Islamic revolution. It is feared that if extremist groups succeed in seizing power in these two countries, this will lead to an unavoidable dynamic change, similar to an unexpected avalanche, in the whole region and the Islamic world. This, in turn, would galvanise popular movements to stand against Western interests as a whole.

Esposito suggests that:

> Egypt has often been regarded as the Arab and Muslim vanguard of development in political, social, intellectual and religious fields; so, too contemporary revivalism (Islamic fundamentalism) in its origins and manifestation has strong, indeed formative, roots in the Egyptian experience.[91]

Rubin states that 'while fundamentalism has become an important factor in Egypt, it is a distinctly minority force; still one should not underestimate its potential appeal'.[92] Furthermore, Seneh maintains that 'when the region is at a crossroads; with one road leading to military conflict and the other to economic growth and cooperation, the question arises – what is Egypt's place in the picture?' and then warns, as many have, that 'a change in the Egyptian regime, should it take place, would be a disaster for the region and a catastrophe for the world'.[93]

Contrary to this, some believe that this 'fear' was exaggerated in order to alleviate any pressure on these two like-minded regimes in the region. For instance, Gerecht suggests that 'rapid change in Egypt is certainly possible'.[94] Noteworthy is that the 2004 UNDP report condemns some regimes – including, if implicitly, the Egyptian regime – as currently pursuing what might be called 'the legitimacy of blackmail' in order to justify their power.

The report states:

> Some regimes now bolster their legitimacy adopting a simplified and efficient formula to justify their continuation in power; they style themselves as the lesser of two evils, or the last line of defence against fundamentalist tyranny or, even more dramatically, against chaos and the collapse of the state.[95]

Apart from this, it could be imagined that should the first assumption – which predicts the 'domino collapse' of the Islamic countries – be realised, then at least some of the lethal weapons that certain of these countries possess, which could be categorised as non-conventional weapons, or weapons of mass destruction, will fall into the hands of extremists or 'Islamists'. In this case, it is not a handful of criminals or terrorists that possess these deadly weapons, but a country or countries, which means that world security would be dramatically disturbed and may even collapse.

This might constitute enough of an explanation of the reasons behind previous Western coordination, between Europe and the United States, in supporting so-called moderate regimes, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Despite all these considerations, and as an embodiment of the radical change of US policy towards the region, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted, frankly and without any kind of prompting, on her official visit to Egypt in June 2005, that the United States was pursuing wrong policies that aimed to achieve stability even if the price was to disregard or sacrifice democracy; evident in that neither democracy nor stability has been achieved. Previously, she declared that the United States would support democratic evolution in Egypt, 'even if this brings, eventually, Islamists to power'.

In her statement, Rice was representing the prevailing trend in the US administration, mainly among the neo-cons who took a hawkish position in their seeking to rebuild the region according to an interests-based vision. At this time, the expression 'creative chaos' appeared in US discourse addressed to the region to confirm, mainly to these two regimes, the readiness and preparedness of the United States to drive change forward in the Middle East, regardless of the magnitude of the

immediate consequences or any other political considerations. Seemingly, the burden of this 'chaos' could be justified, taking into account the envisaged benefits of the US endeavour.

Schweller argues, 'The hegemon's interests are best served by forgoing short run gains in favour of locking in beneficial arrangements and future returns that will continue well beyond the Zenith of its power'.[96] Based on this assumption, it could be suggested that Washington was, perhaps, seeking to build its own and distinctive bridge with new 'moderate' Islamic movements that might help in defeating or subsuming hostile extremist groups. Likewise, following the 7/7 London explosions, former Prime Minister Blair called for the promotion of moderate Islamists to overcome extremist and terrorist movements.[97] On the other hand, some Islamic movements might hold or share the same vision and welcome rapprochement with the United States and the West. Baker notes that 'at the start of the twenty-first century, the new Islamists have struggled to keep their interpretative intellectual and social project open to the world and to the future'.[98]

Against this background, one can identify certain differences between the Europeans and Americans in this regard. Given the fact that they are more aware of prevailing internal situations, and concerned about stability in the Middle East, the Europeans have been more cautious in playing the card of 'moderate Islamists' on account of their traditional relations with long-existing regimes in the region. Indeed, the experience of recent years has shown that the Europeans are more reserved when it comes to making major changes in their policies towards the region.

Another point of view suggests that the difference between the US and European approaches to reform and democracy promotion have been exaggerated.

Youngs argues:

> Europeans have regularly issued warnings aimed at the US that democracy can not be imposed 'through the barrel of a gun'; but much of US policy takes the same kind of gradualist, bottom-up and extremely cautious approach to encouraging political reform in the Middle East.[99]

Young also describes the shortfalls of the policies of both pillars to that end, indicating that both European and US strategies in this respect are poor in terms of lacking enough resources to reward reformist moves; their inability to coordinate decision making in the area of democracy policy; and eschewing systematic engagement with what Young calls 'political Islam'. He then confirms that '[T]ighter trans-Atlantic cooperation would make it more difficult for Middle Eastern regimes to play the EU and US off against each other'.[100]

Importantly, despite the fact that Rice's chaos idea was prevailing in US policy towards the region in the first years of Bush's tenure, there was another trend, although less influential, within the American administration itself which deemed that the immediate imposition of democracy in the region could be catastrophic for Western interests. To clarify, the Israeli lobby in Washington, as along with the traditional wing in American decision-making circles, strongly – and perhaps

rightly – believes that no Islamic movement will be supportive of Western interests and of peaceful relations with Israel.[101]

Overall, the Middle East as a whole, exhausted by and tied to its liabilities, cannot become fully democratic simply by applying an imposed or recommended foreign prescription all at once. Illogically, democracy is frequently described as a panacea that would absorb and eliminate the problems of the region. Tibi takes this view, affirming that 'democracy and democratisation remains the only alternative to Islamic fundamentalism in that part of the world'.[102] Mailer maintains that 'democracy is built upon a notion that is exquisite and dangerous; it virtually states that if the will of the populace is freely expressed, more good than bad will result'.[103]

In reality, democracy is based on and related to its enduring values and prerequisites – for instance, education and proper living conditions – and without enough preparation it could be nothing more than a myth or illusion that might lead nowhere. Reasonably, the necessary steps in the right direction will take at least between 10 to 20 years; otherwise, the region could be entangled in a very chaotic situation. More bluntly, applying democracy in a negative environment, i.e. surrounded by illiteracy, poverty and illness, etc., could and might, and most probably would, lead to the coming of extremist movements to power in key Middle Eastern countries. If this happened, the Middle East would be changed dramatically in such a way that it might destroy regional and international peace and security. Fukuyama warns that the results of the recent elections in Palestine and Egypt led to a conclusion that liberal democracy, as it is being applied in the West, is not a suitable formula for the Middle East because it will certainly bring radical Islamist groups to power.[104]

Schnobel and others agree:

> In order to push forward democratisation processes while advancing internal and regional security, reforms must be gradual and monitored and controlled from the top; and they must be supplemented by a similarly gradual process towards the establishment of a broad based and broadly supported civil society.[105]

Noticeably, hawkish policy aimed at imposing an American vision of democracy in the region waned in the last two years of Bush's era, as proven by US reactions towards recent elections in Egypt and Palestine.[106] This could be seen as a success for the neo-liberals – as opposed to the neo-cons – in Washington. Asmus and Pollack underline that both neo-cons and neo-liberals realised that the status quo in the Middle East region was intolerable because it was producing anti-Americanism and terrorism, but they disagreed on how to handle the matter. Asmus and Pollack clarify that the neo-liberals believe, contrary to the neo-cons, that democratisation must be developed and implemented from within and over the long run; that any kind of imposition is bound to fail.[107]

In the same vein, Gordon holds that due to the results of recent elections in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt and Palestine, the United States has lost much of its keenness to support spreading democracy in the region, no matter what the consequences might be.[108]

Given all these dimensions of the current picture, reference should be made that the first US attempt to apply its new approach in the region was crystallised in its new initiative for the new 'Greater' Middle East.

The short-lived US 'Initiative of the Greater Middle East'

Having engaged in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, in which hundreds of thousands were killed, the US administration sought to appease tensions and improve its besmirched image in the region by launching a new initiative to back up the reform efforts and to affirm its commitment to working seriously to ending the catastrophic situation in the Middle East. The first step in this direction was made on 28 January 2004, when former President Bush declared in his State of the Union address what was called 'the Initiative of the Greater Middle East'.[109] The logic of this initiative, as mentioned in the same speech, was 'America's self-interest in promoting democracy and well-being', because 'As long as the Middle East remains a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will continue to produce men and movements that threaten the safety of America and our friends'.[110]

In the same speech, Bush expressed his strong belief that all religious currents would side with freedom in the attempt to appease the hostility of Muslims.

Inspired by the 1975 Helsinki Accords,[111] the initiative offered US readiness to support economic and human development, democracy and the promotion of the role of civil society organisations. Coming at the same time as the 2003 United Nations Arab Human Development Report, it could not be considered coincidence that the content of the American initiative matched the three parameters of this report, which were freedom, knowledge and female empowerment.

The US view in this regard was illustrated as follows:

> The US Middle East partnership initiative will provide a framework and funding for the US to work together with governments and people in the Arab world to expand economic, political and educational opportunities for all. The initiative will encompass more than $1 billion in assistance that the US government provides to Arab countries annually. The initiative is a partnership and we will work closely with governments in the Arab world, other donors, academic institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organisations.[112]

The Arab reaction was not positive. The International Institute for Strategic Studies comments that:

> In a region rife with speculation about conspiracies and neuralgic about the resonance of colonialism, the sudden revelation of the American plan confirmed suspicions of an impending assertion of foreign control of the region; inside and outside the region, the proposal has been assailed as an encroachment on state sovereignty, dismissive of historical injustices, and redundant in the context of earlier initiatives.[113]

Overall, the initiative was characterised by ambiguity. It failed to outline how its objectives would be fulfilled. Nor did it give a clear definition of the geographical area it designated, although it was well known that it was designed to focus on Arab countries. Furthermore, it did not explain how it would manage to reconcile the regimes' policies and people's aspirations towards political reform and social justice.

What increased, significantly, doubts about the real intentions or sincerity of the initiative, both on official and popular levels, were the ramifications and repercussions of the Iraq war. In this regard, it was noticeable that there was a high level of rapprochement of the positions of regimes and peoples of the Middle East towards opposing US policies in general. Robert and Pauly observe that other autocratic countries of the region – either religious like Saudi Arabia and Iran, or secular, like Egypt and Syria – fear that they could be the next candidate for regime change and subsequent economic and political transformation, as Iraq has set up a model that could be repeated.[114]

Doubtless this is why observers witnessed identical official and popular refusal of the US initiative. Indeed, once it was leaked to an Arab newspaper, *Al-Hayat*, it was promptly met by strong criticism from Arab countries, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as they felt, for the first time, threatened and marginalised, given that there had been no prior consultation with them. The two regimes, rightly or wrongly, perceived that the United States was ready to sacrifice the traditional balance of power for the sake of applying its new vision of the Middle East.

Likewise, some European allies – especially France – looked with scepticism at this initiative, believing that the United States aimed to monopolise, if not impose on them, a way of dealing with the region, despite its importance to their own security and stability. European fears and criticism of US policy focused on the charge that Washington concentrated too much on symptoms rather than causes. What is more, it appeared there had been no consultation between the transatlantic allies prior to the launch of this initiative.

Fouskas and Gokay believe that 'Bush's GME (Greater Middle East) initiative aims at bringing NATO deeper into the Islamic world of former Ottoman and Soviet territories, thus dragging the Europeans into a dangerous voyage with no return tickets available'.[115]

In summary, the Greater Middle East Initiative was destined to failure because it could gain support neither from key countries in the region nor other great powers that have their own interests and distinctive relationships with many countries in the Middle East region. Most importantly, the increasing wave of anti-Americanism, because of massive bloodshed in Iraq, emboldened popular refusal of the initiative and led many observers to consider it as another US attempt at intervention in order to monopolise or control the region.

Since, Washington has come to recognise that there is no option but to secure international support for its endeavour; indeed, that it is too difficult to handle other Middle Eastern issues without European and international support. This realisation was illustrated in the launching of the G8 global initiative. Moreover, the US has arguably also realised that it cannot, practically speaking, achieve

change in the region without securing a certain level of consent from its component countries. This realisation was reinforced, as mentioned previously, by the resurgent influence of the traditional neo-liberal wing in decision-making circles in Washington, which has held onto the vision of 'gradual change'. Meanwhile, key European countries have acknowledged the need to pursue Middle East reform more seriously based on the conviction that the situation there could no longer be tolerated. Hence also the need to coordinate policies with the United States as well as other great powers.

The G8 initiative for the 'Broader' Middle East and North Africa

Gathering in June 2004 on Sea Island, Georgia, the leaders of G8 countries launched what is known as the 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa'.

The new initiative represented, to some extent, the fruit of the convergence of US and European visions, though not necessarily on an equal footing. In short, whereas the G8 initiative reflected, in its essence, the precedence or superiority of the European way of supporting gradual and well-calculated change, it did not leave out the more forceful approach of the US.

In scrutinising its content, certain observations can be drawn:[116]

1 From this time, the region became a place of great concern to the world's most powerful countries, led by the United States. This new reality appeared to oblige Middle Eastern and North African regimes to respond positively, and to some extent blocked some of them from engaging in political manoeuvring between Europe and America. Paragraph 1 indicated that '"the Broader Middle East and North Africa" represents a challenge to us and the international community as a whole'.[117] Also, Paragraph 9 stated that 'the magnitude of the challenge facing the region requires a renewed commitment to reform and cooperation'.[118]
2 The declaration confirmed, in its introductory sections, the imperative of building democracy as a global demand. The G8 countries declared their support for the democratic and reform process, but with a new emphasis that reform should be 'emanating from that region'.[119] This appears to have been a clear outcome of European influence and, also perhaps, late American recognition of the importance of traditional strategic calculations in terms of the necessities and requirements for regional peace and stability.
3 The declaration also emphasised the commitment of G8 countries to the establishment of a 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future'. This partnership would be based on cooperative relations between G8 countries, Middle Eastern country governments and other key players, such as business and civil society representatives. This orientation, perhaps unprecedented in its nature and context, gave warning to Middle Eastern governments that they would no longer be the only party deciding the depth and pace of such cooperation. Likewise, it aimed to entice civil society into promoting itself

in such a manner as to influence the direction of state policies, backed by the support of the most powerful and richest countries in the world.[120] Moreover, Paragraph 4 underlined that 'the values embodied in this partnership we propose are universal', such as 'human dignity, freedom, democracy, rule of law, social justice'.[121] This seems to have been, again, an explicit message to the region's regimes that the time had come to change the status quo; that no excuse of cultural relativism would be accepted.

4 The sponsors of the new partnership adhered to some guiding principles, including, first and foremost, to work towards strengthening commitments to peace and stability of the Broader Middle East and North Africa. This represented an attempt to appease the worries of some countries in the region by assuring them that the Iraq scenario would not be repeated.

5 As a positive response to the demands of key states in the region, backed by the declared position of key European states, it is stated that 'the resolution of long lasting disputes, especially the Israeli–Palestinian, is an important element of progress in the region'.[122] However, the following point (Paragraph 5.3) appeared to confirm that regional conflicts must not be an obstacle to reform, and that 'reforms may make a significant contribution towards resolving regional conflicts'.[123] This was perhaps a nod to differences in orientation between the EU and US, although some may consider this 'formula' an incarnation of the US vision that sees no link between the reform issue and resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and opposes the Arab and European view in this regard. The latter tends to lend more importance to stability in the Arab street; taking into account an issue that always ignites hostile attitudes towards the West and the United States.

6 The initiative confirmed that the restoration of peace and stability in Iraq is critical to the security of the region.[124] The rather vague manner in which this idea was phrased seems to have been the only way to overcome serious differences with regards to Iraq between European allies like France, on the one hand, and the United States and the UK on the other. What was not mentioned – or was perhaps omitted – were US government slogans that Iraq was a beacon of democratisation for the region.

7 In another attempt to appease concerns, Paragraph 5.5 underlined that 'successful reform depends on the region, and change cannot be imposed from the outside'.[125] This doubtless reflected similarities between the European and Arab positions in this regard. American pressure, however, still made its mark, the applicable paragraph phrased, 'each society will reach its own conclusions about the pace and scope of change; yet distinctiveness, important as it is, must not be exploited to prevent reform'.[126] This appears to have been a signal to whoever is concerned that global patience – and primarily US patience – is not inexhaustible.

8 Repeatedly, the declaration confirmed that 'support' would involve governments and people, and that 'supporting reform is a long term effort that requires generational commitments'.[127] The launching of the partnership

was described as a process that 'Builds on years of support for reform and ongoing engagement in the region, which includes the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the US Middle East Partnership initiative, and the Japan–Arab Dialogue initiative'.[128] This appeared to affirm the complementarities between all initiatives; nothing could be gained if targeted countries ignored this newly emerged initiative.

The declaration established that the newly designed partnership would focus on three areas of interest:[129] a) 'the political sphere' would concentrate on progress towards democracy and the rule of law; b) 'the social and cultural sphere' would deal with issues of education, freedom of expression, equality between men and women and access to global information technology; and c) 'the economic sphere' would focus on creating jobs, supporting the private sector, increasing access to capital, expanding trade and investment, securing property rights and promoting intra-regional trade.

Additionally, in a decisive action emphasising their determination to pursue reform seriously, G8 leaders attached the 'G8 Plan of Support for Reform'[130] to their declaration. This plan was produced through consultation and dialogue with 'leaders and peoples in the region, including the Arab League'.[131] It presented certain initiatives that offer 'a broad range of opportunities from which governments, business, and civil society in the region can draw support as they choose'.[132]

The main points of the plan can be summarised as follows:[133]

1 The establishment of a 'forum for the future' to provide a ministerial framework for ongoing dialogue between G8 foreign, economic and other relevant ministers and their counterparts on a regular basis. This forum would be paralleled by business-to-business and civil society dialogue. The aim of this forum was to serve as a collaborative vehicle for the exchange of information and enhancement of cooperation. As such, the forum embodies the seriousness of G8 engagement in the affairs of the region from this time on.
2 Launching a package of measures to help the region economically. This included a micro-finance initiative to provide the region with sustainable capital access, with a focus on small entrepreneurs, especially women; enhancing and exerting efforts to extend literacy to an additional 20 million people by 2015; enhancing support for business, entrepreneurship and vocational programmes to increase the capacities of young people, especially women, and to expand their employment opportunities; the establishment of a 'Broader Middle East and North Africa Private Enterprise Development Facility' at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), with the aim of assisting countries of the region to improve business and investment climates and increase financing options for the region's small and medium-sized enterprises; the establishment of a regional 'network of funds' to facilitate coordination between representatives of development agencies based in the region and their counterparts from international financial institutions, in order to improve existing programmes and resource access; and the establishment

with partners of a 'Task Force on Investment' to help address impediments to investment and propose concrete change.

3 In the same context, the plan's sponsors pledged to work towards accelerating economic development, creating jobs, empowering the private sector and expanding economic opportunities by supporting vocational training; supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises; facilitating remittance flows from communities overseas; supporting the region's efforts to create fair, secure and well-functioning property rights systems; promoting financial excellence and supporting efforts in the region to integrate its financial sector into the global financial system; and assisting regional efforts to remove barriers to investment and supporting the region's efforts to achieve economic integration, promote intra-regional trade and expand trade opportunities in global markets.

4 The establishment 'with willing partners' of a 'Democracy Assistance Dialogue' that could pave the way towards an effective exchange of information, ideas, lessons learned on democracy, etc.; supporting efforts to ensure free and transparent elections by cooperating with willing countries; and supporting and encouraging parliamentary exchanges and training. Again, the use of the term 'willing' was some sort of reassurance to existing regimes that there shall be no forcible intervention in the issue of democratisation, so they could respond positively to what was offered to them by this multi-faceted initiative.

5 Supporting regional efforts to expand and increase women's participation in political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields, and enhancing their rights and status in society.

6 Assisting the region in pursuing judicial reforms aimed to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

7 Supporting the region's efforts to reinforce freedoms of expression, thought and belief, and to encourage an independent media.

8 Encouraging the region's efforts to foster the democratic process and promote good governance, transparency and anti-corruption efforts. This included encouragement for the adoption and implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption, and providing technical assistance for reform and modernisation in related fields; and supporting efforts to strengthen the role of all components of civil society, including NGOs, in the region's reform processes.

9 Combating illiteracy and advancing education by assisting countries interested in improving and reforming their educational systems; increasing availability of and access to textbooks and regional and world literature; and assisting in enhancing digital literacy and understanding.

What was ignored in this initiative was the issue of direct aid, though alleviating economic burdens that breed popular dissatisfaction might logically have seemed a priority. A lack of trust in some governments' abilities to wisely use foreign aid arguably led G8 countries to propose programmes of 'cooperation' as opposed to furnishing funds directly.

In this regard, Lieven writes, 'US rhetoric of democratising the Middle East risks becoming a cheap way of avoiding looking at the crucial issues facing the region, because to deal with them would be very costly, both for the United States and the European Union as a whole, and for individual members of the US political classes'. He adds that supporting democracy in the Middle East region would require, in reality, a considerable increase of American aid and assistance and a reduction of agricultural barriers and subsidies by both the United States and the EU, and that this would be resisted internally by powerful agricultural lobbies.[134]

Wittes and Yerkes identify three troubling flaws in the G8 initiative which are: 'A scatter-shot approach to promoting reform; an overemphasis on government directed assistance that repeats instead of repairs the errors of our past assistance in the region; and, most worrying, a lack of support at higher policy levels for its goals and projects'.[135]

Nonetheless, the conclusion could be reached that, in contrast to the previous US initiative that appeared somewhat over-ambitious and vague, the G8 initiative was more realistic and feasible in adopting a holistic and gradual strategy in dealing with the chronic problems of the Middle East region. The declaration dealt with all elements of the change process, which together could achieve the required modernisation, at least in the long run. The drafting seems to have been tempered by realism, taking into consideration contemporary indicators in the region, which dictate that change must be gradual if chaos or catastrophe is to be avoided.

This notwithstanding, the summit conveyed a clear message that reform would be compulsory and inevitably forthcoming. This message mirrored realities in the region, spelling out the need for change that takes into account the aspirations of Middle Eastern peoples with regards to real reform and development. Gerner and Schwedler argue that despite internal and international obstacles that hinder meaningful political reform, there is almost an overwhelming consensus in the region that reform is going to happen at the end of the day, particularly when taking into account that present ageing leaders will be replaced soon by younger leaders presiding over younger citizens.[136]

Presumably, most of the existing regimes do not object to receiving help on the path to reform. But contention surrounds how rapid and how inclusive this reform can be. Basically, existing regimes ask what sort of sacrifices they will have to make to achieve this end. Tripp asserts that the histories of imperialism and capitalist penetration have created imaginative and material legacies with which the present generation engages and, 'in doing so, they are not simply victims or captives of these legacies, but will be seeking to cope with or profit from the outside world which makes demands upon them'.[137] In other words, existing regimes may seek to accommodate, at least to some extent, the demands of the great powers.

At the 2005 G8 summit in Scotland, leaders reconfirmed their commitment to the 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa'. They also welcomed steps taken in the region to accelerate political, economic, social and educational reform, and stressed their support for the emerging momentum of change in the region.

In sum, the Greater Middle East is emerging, through the G8 mechanism, as an area of international coordination, at the strategic level, towards the final goals of reform and democracy. If the two parties – i.e. the G8 and Middle Eastern and North African countries – cooperate together in good faith, considerable improvement could be achieved.

However, achievements attained through the G8 mechanism should not obscure the fact that there are other existing differences between some European allies and the United States with regards to major issues in the Middle East region. These differences are discussed in following chapters.

Conclusion

The Middle East has long been a primary concern in world politics. Its strategic importance, before 9/11, was related mainly to traditional Western needs to secure the flow of oil and natural gas, given that the region contains the largest known energy reserves worldwide. The 9/11 attacks shook the Western world and proved that Middle East terrorism could challenge the world's sole superpower – the United States – on home ground. After 9/11, the Middle East region came in the minds of many – principally in the US – to constitute a threat to world peace and security. Bearing in mind indicators of its socio-economic condition, the region was seen as a powder keg set to explode.

Nonetheless, Middle East terrorism is not solely a result of deteriorating conditions in the Middle East but also a mixture of intertwined factors, including a culture of perpetual war, frequent foreign intervention and perceived hostility between Islam and the West.

What makes the situation dangerous, at least from a Western perspective, is that the region is thought to be flooded with weapons of mass destruction, as well as advanced conventional weapons. This means that terrorist groups could acquire lethal weapons by toppling key long-standing regimes.

Chomsky believes that the unfolding crisis in the Middle East will have momentous effects on the world stage, deciding whether the US will succeed in establishing a global security system for its own benefit or whether resistance against this project will defeat US plans.[138]

In light of this alarming situation, huge international efforts have been launched, principally by the United States, to handle, contain and treat this danger. Among the tools chosen to back up other international efforts is NATO. Rynning comments on transatlantic cooperation in this regard, saying, 'It has committed the United States and Europe to a partnership for reform in this broad region, and it will happen multilaterally, making use of existing institutions such as NATO, the EU, the G8, and the UN'.[139]

The following chapter concentrates on the evolution of NATO with a view to drawing the main features of its new global role and its relevance to the Middle East.

2 NATO's new global role and its relevance to the Middle East

This chapter focuses on the new role of the North Atlantic Alliance and its relevance to the Middle East region. The term 'new' is understood as the wholesale transformation of the Alliance and expansion of its area of interest, laid down by the 1949 Washington Treaty, in the post-Cold War world. To be sure, member states began the transformation process even before the demise of the former Soviet Union. It is work that continues until now, profoundly changing NATO from a Cold War collective security mechanism into a new organisation that takes a holistic approach to dealing with pressing security issues, attaching key importance to the political dimension. The whole transformation process has run, to a great extent, in parallel with the core postulates of liberal institutionalism. The aim of what follows is to evaluate the major trends of the transformation process and their bearing upon on the Middle East, as well as to show how the chosen theoretical framework has informed this process. In particular, this is made clear with respect to the impact of the two main strategic concepts as well as the two major vehicles of the transformation process – 'enlargement' and 'Partnership for Peace'.

Developments in the 1990s

The 1991 Strategic Concept

As the North Atlantic Alliance started its transformation process, it was necessary and unavoidable to change its long-standing guiding principles. Consequently, at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome in 1991, heads of state and government, while reaffirming the basic principles and concepts of the Alliance, approved and adopted the first ever published NATO Strategic Concept.[1] Its content can be summarised as follows:

1 The North Atlantic Alliance is purely defensive in purpose; NATO's policy is based on the collective defence and indivisible security of member allies. Previously, the allies reassured the former Soviet Union, at the London Summit in 1990,[2] that 'We will remain a defensive Alliance and will continue to defend all the territory of all our members … we have no aggressive intention … we will never in any circumstances be the first to use force'.[3]

2 For the first time, the Alliance started to define and recognise security calculations not specifically in terms of the traditional massive confrontation, but rather from a multi-faceted perspective. Paragraphs 5, 8 and 9 state that:
   - The monolithic, massive and potentially immediate threat which was the principal concern of the Alliance in its first 40 years has disappeared … [Now], unlike the predominant threat of the past, the risks to allied security are multi-faceted in nature and multi-directional as well as hard to predict and assess … [T]hese risks are the result of the adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial despites, which are faced by many countries in Central and Eastern Europe.[4]
   - Furthermore, Paragraph 12 underlined the need to take into account that 'the Alliance security interest can be affected by other risks of a wider nature, including proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, disruption of the flow of vital resources and actions of terrorism and sabotage'.[5] This new set of challenges appears as a radical change in the Alliance's doctrine.

3 The fundamental tasks of the Alliance were clearly identified. These include:
   - The maintenance of a military capability sufficient to prevent war and to provide for effective defence, an overall capability to manage successfully crises affecting the security of its members, and the pursuit of political efforts favouring dialogue with other nations; as well as the active search for a cooperative approach to European security, including the field of arms control and disarmament.[6]
   - Noticeably, more emphasis was increasingly given to the political dimension with regards to achieving the goals of security policy in general. In the same context, heads of state and government participating in the London Summit in 1990 stated, 'We reaffirm that security and stability do not lie solely in the military dimension, and we intend to enhance the political component of our Alliance as provided for by Article 2 of our treaty'.[7]

4 The importance of the Middle Eastern and South Mediterranean regions started to emerge in the strategic calculations of the Alliance. Seemingly, the alleviation of NATO's concern over the arsenal of the Soviet Union, 'both conventional and nuclear', enabled the Alliance to speed up its steps in the transformation process and turn its eyes towards security matters on its Southern periphery. The Strategic Concept assured that the stability and peace of countries on the Southern periphery of Europe was important for the security of the Alliance, as was made clear during the 1991 Gulf War.

   This concern could be observed in certain paragraphs, especially Paragraph 11, which stated, 'The allies also wish to maintain peaceful and non-adversarial relations with the countries of the South Mediterranean and Middle East'.[8] This was accompanied by reference to the build-up of military power and the proliferation of weapons technologies in the area, including weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles capable of reaching the territory of some member states.[9]

It could be understood that the experience gained from the first Gulf War overshadowed the Alliance's assessment at that time. In fact, the priority currently given to the Middle East can be traced to that moment, bearing in mind that it was strongly believed that all global threats against the interests of the Alliance, as identified by Paragraph 12, existed – and still do – in the turbulent Middle East region. At that time, there was no significant focus on the dangers of fundamentalism or terrorism. As is shown later, terrorism has become one of the main concerns of the Alliance and almost synonymous with Middle Eastern issues.

5 It was also confirmed that the new order of the post-Cold War world did not change the purpose or security functions of the Alliance. While emphasising NATO's enduring vitality, the document underlined certain themes: the need to adopt a broader approach to security;[10] the scope of the Alliance, as well as member states' rights and obligations as provided for in the Washington Treaty, remained unchanged;[11] there was a unique opportunity to change the structure, size and readiness of forces accordingly and maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces; and the Alliance would thereby keep the necessary flexibility for further developments in the politico-military arena, especially with regards to new emerging risks.[12]

6 The strategic concept also underlined the Alliance's determination to pursue vigorously further progress in arms control and confidence-building measures. It should be noted that Paragraph 50 highlights that 'The Alliance … remains committed to the earliest possible achievement of a global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable ban of all chemical weapons'.[13] Again, this may explain why the Middle East became, at that time, one of the top priorities for the Alliance.

7 The preferred and chosen working strategy was based on three factors, also declared in the 1991 Rome Declaration and its subsequent documents. This formula was expressed as follows:

> Our security policy can now be based on three mutually reinforcing elements: dialogue, cooperation, and the maintenance of a collective defence capability … and use, as appropriate, of these elements will be particularly important to prevent or manage [emerging crises].[14]

8 The document displayed prudence by, from the very beginning of the transformation process, excluding any possible clash between NATO's role or purpose and the success of a common European defence and security policy.[15] None of NATO's subsequent major documents ignored this issue. Instead, many statements confirm and assure that there should and will be no overlap of work between the two different entities, underlining the importance of ensuring transparency and complementarity between them.[16] Frequent confirmation was also given that a stronger unified European policy would add to the Alliance's abilities and enable European allies to narrow the capabilities gap between NATO's two pillars, Europe and the United States.

The 1991 Strategic Concept gave birth to – or confirmed – a new direction for NATO. This included: complete and radical change, by which the Alliance has become not only a military but also political organisation; change in the definition of security through which various sources of threats are identified; agreement on preserving basic concepts, purposes and tasks while fulfilling the requirements of the adaptation process; and recognition of the need to address dangers emanating from the global South, including repercussions from the first Gulf War. These concepts guided the transformation process throughout subsequent years, repeatedly and frequently underlined in documents issued by different summits and ministerial meetings of the Alliance during the 1990s.[17]

The 1999 Strategic Concept

On the eve of the opening of the twenty-first century, the United States realised that the time had come to instigate a turning point in the history of the Alliance in order to accelerate and boost its transformation process. Therefore, on NATO's fiftieth anniversary in April 1999, member states gathered in Washington to review and assess the transformation process of the Alliance. One result of this historic summit was an updated Strategic Concept,[18] formulated to guide the Alliance in detailed policy and strategy in the twenty-first century. The new Strategic Concept, similar to the 1991 concept, addressed public opinion in an attempt to demonstrate good will and a desire for cooperation with others away from confrontational attitudes and ideological conflicts.

Briefly, it reaffirmed the importance of the transatlantic link between North America and Europe and the indivisibility of their security and common interests. It then reviewed, contributed to and highlighted new patterns of cooperation, such as the Partnership for Peace concept and dialogue, as well as some guiding policies, such as conflict prevention, crisis management and arms control. In addition, it underlined cooperative links with European security and defence policy organs. The document also offered guidance for the process of restructuring alliance forces and defined new characteristics of conventional and nuclear forces. This broad-based approach reflected, in essence, the willingness of member states – mainly the United States – to push the Alliance forward in such a way as to give 'added value', and according to the slogan, 'We, the allies, [will] enter the twenty-first century together, armed by our transformed Alliance'.

The basic points of the 1999 Strategic Concept can be summarised as follows:

1 With respect to security challenges, the 1999 Strategic Concept indicated that although the danger of general war in Europe, or against the Alliance, had virtually disappeared, other threats to the interests of member states remained. These dangers were deemed to include: ethnic conflict; the abuse or violation of human rights; political instability; economic fragility that may lead to unstable social conditions; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery; and the dangers of terrorism.[19] At this point, observation could also be made that the sources of danger, as identified in

this updated document, as well as the 1991 document, were so diverse and vast that it became imperative to change or develop the scope, jurisdiction and the area of interest of the Alliance, transforming it from a collective defence and security organisation strictly limited to the Euro-Atlantic area to a global security organisation prepared to deter enemies and deal with a variety of security threats.

2 The document reaffirmed the need to preserve a dynamic partnership between Europe and North America. As far as European policy is concerned, the updated concept affirmed that European security and defence identity would continue to be developed within the Alliance on the basis of directives formulated by alliance foreign ministers in Berlin in 1996 and thereafter. The document stated that this process would require close cooperation between the two sides, and then affirmed that this process would enable European allies to contribute in a more effective manner to the Alliance's activities and missions.[20]

3 In spite of the absence of the probability of any major attack, the Strategic Concept confirmed the need to maintain effective and efficient military capabilities adequate to existing security circumstances.[21] These range from collective defence – the central theme of the Alliance's strategy – to crisis response. Experience gained in Bosnia and Kosovo led alliance strategic planners to recognise that future military missions are likely to take place outside member states' territories. They also realised that – most probably – these operations would involve troops from both allied and non-allied partner countries, requiring the coordination of different skill and training regimes. To achieve this objective, the Washington summit launched the NATO Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), in order to prepare the Alliance's forces to deter hostilities in the twenty-first century, in particular by enhancing mobility, deployability, sustainability, effective engagement, survivability and interoperable communications and surveillance.

NATO's handbook explains:

> Mobility and deployability means ability to deploy forces quickly where they are needed, even outside the area of the Alliance; sustainability means ability to maintain and supply forces far from their home bases; effective engagement means the ability to successfully engage and fight an enemy or adversary in different types of operations; survivability means the ability to protect forces and infrastructure against any possible threats; interoperable communications means compatible and successful command and control and information exchange mechanisms.[22]

In addition, the need for improvement in surveillance and reconnaissance, in order to better protect forces in out-of-area missions, was also recognised.[23] The conclusive impact of changes to alliance forces, effected through the transformation process as a whole and DCI in particular, was a significant reduction in the size of forces and a tangible increase in mobility and readiness. From 1991 to 1997, defence budgets decreased by averages of

30 per cent; armed forces decreased in size by 28–40 per cent for most member countries; land forces were drawn down 25 per cent, major warships by 20 per cent, and combat aircraft by 30 per cent; US forces in Europe were drawn down 66 per cent, from 300,000 to 100,000 military personnel; air squadrons reduced from four to two; and brigades from 17 to four since 1989; all chemical weapons were withdrawn; and 80 per cent of nuclear weapons were withdrawn.[24] Recently, it has been disclosed that this trend has continued: for instance, ground forces have been cut by 25 per cent, major naval vessels by 40 per cent and air force combat squadrons by 40 per cent.[25]

This nature of the change in the Alliance's forces appears to be irrefutable evidence of its seriousness in anticipating movement out of the Euro-Atlantic area, to defend the interests of member states whenever and wherever necessary, without ignoring the need to keep sufficient military readiness capable of facing major developments in NATO's traditional area of interest. This could be considered almost a complete shift in the Alliance's doctrine, transforming it from a 'defensive' organ to a 'defensive and offensive' one in nature, preparedness and orientation.

Importantly, the adherence shown to international legitimacy and the role of the United Nations, underlined by the 1999 Strategic Concept, set a legal limit for the future manoeuvring of the Alliance, and seemed designed to alleviate the worries of others worldwide. In other words, mentioning the United Nations[26] as a point of reference simply meant that NATO still, at that time, fully abided by international law, and was not seeking to obtain the right to identify when to strike, other than by the will of the international community.

4 The document also afforded great importance to the Alliance's prospective role with regards to conflict prevention and crisis management. Again, the concept of conflict prevention highlighted the political dimension of the Alliance.[27] This political role, which may include the role of diplomacy and consultation, etc., has been widening in recent years to the extent that has led NATO officials to frequently emphasise that NATO is a 'politico-security/military' organisation, obscuring that NATO, by nature and structure, is a military organisation.[28]

5 The document pointed out the principal instruments that the Alliance has been using in dealing with non-member states, especially those on its periphery. These instruments include the Partnership for Peace programme, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, special or distinctive relationships with both Russia and Ukraine and the Mediterranean Dialogue.[29] The declared notion that accompanied the launching of the whole transformation process was that 'it would not exclude anybody' from participating in efforts aimed at enhancing security and overcoming the roots of misperception, lack of trust, and division that may cause conflicts.[30] Apparently, the importance given to the Middle East was confined to South Mediterranean countries and did not amount to a top priority of NATO policy, as happened later in the post-9/11 period.

6 Finally, the Strategic Concept showed unlimited support for pursuing – and exerting all efforts to realise – the aims set out in alliance policy with regards to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. It also assured that this aspect of the Alliance policy would be dealt with in harmony with its approach to defence.[31]

Thus, it might be argued that the Strategic Concept, while not stating detailed measures with regards to the above-mentioned aims, left a lot of room for interpretation – i.e. whether these aims will be achieved by forcible and coercive policies or through persuasive means. It seems that at the Washington Summit, concern about certain conventional weapons – like ballistic missiles – did not appear to be considered particularly important, which was not the case at subsequent alliance summits.[32]

Broadly speaking, one can conclude that the new Strategic Concept, as agreed upon at the 1999 Washington Summit, was a classic compromise document that successfully sought to hide or shroud existing differences in attitudes and policies between the allies in an ambiguous formula that could be interpreted in different ways, according to political expediency, afterwards. Clearly, the document bridged the gap between the need to develop the role of the Alliance and a keenness to respect the principles of international law. This balance was achieved through what could be described as a language of 'constructive ambiguity'.

The two strategic concepts appear obviously influenced by liberal institutionalism as reviewed in the introductory chapter. To begin with, turning a pure military alliance into a military–security–politico alliance – i.e. increasingly enlarging and reinforcing the political and security dimensions while preserving the military one – was seen as a vehicle to encourage other countries, particularly those of strategic importance, to consider cooperating with NATO in some of its activities. In the same context, developing a broad definition of security away from traditional fears of massive attack, encompassing many sources of threat, including social and economic aspects while reflecting understandings about post-Cold War realities, confirmed the Alliance's need and readiness to foster cooperation with others.

This tremendous shift in NATO doctrine was based on liberal institutionalist concepts. First, whereas military might is still of high importance, as it is 'the final determiner of [the] outcomes of interstate relations once it is invoked',[33] its importance has eroded in recent years amid the necessity of handling many different international problems. Accordingly, there was no alternative but to cooperate with others in security and political fields based on the belief that politics is not a zero-sum game; that cooperation will improve the security of everyone. Kolodziej mentions, 'The depreciation of material power and force opens the way to explain and decide interstate relations in terms of other interests and different forms of power'.[34]

Second, showing adherence to international legitimacy represented by the United Nations and the principles of international law was implicit reassurance to appease the worries of others. As for the former Soviet Union, as well as its successor, Russia, explicit messages were clearly announced to assure all that NATO would never be the first to use force. This was proof of a non-hostile posture. In

this respect, NATO was exerting efforts to change Russia's perceptions as well as preferences towards the West. This attitude was in conformity with liberal institutionalist assumptions that state preferences and perceptions, rather than capabilities, are instrumental in shaping foreign interactions. Underlining the role of the United Nations as a venue for managing the security issues and achieving 'collective security' are also integral parts of the theory.

Third, promoting new concepts like 'conflict prevention' and 'crisis management', as well as supporting international efforts with regards to non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, were serious attempts to allow NATO to contribute positively to maintaining world peace and stability based on the conviction that international anarchy can be controlled – or its effects at least mitigated – and that war or violence are exceptional, not the norm. In doing so, NATO aimed to enlarge its contribution via fostering patterns of cooperation between its allies and non-allies in these areas. Being an institution, this could be considered, in-line with liberal institutionalism theory, as an advantage, because institutions can act as a facilitator of international cooperation without the existence of any hegemonic power.

Fourth, these new endeavours did not contradict efforts to increase and improve NATO's capabilities to intervene whenever and wherever necessary, for instance in Bosnia, which remains one of NATO's main priorites since the inception of the transformation process. Importantly, liberal institutionalism theory does not require excluding the possibility of resorting to power whenever necessary to protect primary interests. But this only comes as a last resort after having exhausted all other options. Kegley states that 'Liberals recommend replacing cutthroat, balance of power politics with organization based on the principle that a threat to peace anywhere is a common threat to everyone'.[35] He adds, 'the use of persuasion rather than coercion, and a reliance on judicial methods to settle rival claims, are the primary means of dealing with conflict'.[36]

Fifth, there was frequent mention that NATO and its key member countries upheld and endorsed the basic values of liberalism that include democracy and human rights. To a significant extent, this was an attempt to grant NATO, as an institution, the required moral power that might enable it to influence the course of events in the international arena. Kegely mentions, 'Neoliberalism focuses on the ways in which influences such as democratic governance, public opinion, international law … and ethically inspired statecraft can improve life on our planet'.[37]

In fact, the two strategic concepts lay down – and paved the way for launching – certain mechanisms that constitute the backbone of the Alliance's transformation process. The following sections focus on some of those mechanisms with a view to identifying the basic dynamics and factors of NATO's transformation from a regional to global organisation.

Enlargement

Fundamentally, the most important feature of the transformation process has been the enlargement mechanism by which every democratic European country has the

right to seek membership of the Alliance by following the appropriate preparatory procedures. This has come about in conformity with Article 10 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, in which the allies clearly stated and undertook that 'The parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this treaty'.[38]

The essence of this enlargement process is to use NATO, as an institution, to foster the habits and patterns of military, security and political cooperation, consequently eliminating hostility and/or alleviating suspicions between concerned countries. NATO, as is illustrated later, has achieved the most successful political and security integration in history, by which yesterday's foes have become today's allies. In conformity with liberal institutionalism, this integration was gradual and cumulative over time. New members were of the view that enhancing the possibilities of cooperation, via NATO as a mechanism or institution, would create shared interests and, consequently, improve their security altogether. To achieve this objective, they had to accept – individually and collectively – sets of rules and regimes that govern their regional and international behaviours.

This process started even before the end of the Cold War for different political and strategic reasons, so that the number of signatories to the treaty increased from 12 to 16 states.[39] With the end of the Cold War and the onset of the transformation process, the Alliance repeated that enlargement would not exclude any country that is able to fulfil the requirements of membership. On the other hand, it has been frequently underlined that enlargement constitutes a threat to nobody; that the Alliance would remain a defensive alliance.

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were the first to join the Alliance in 1999. Arguably, these countries rushed to seek membership for the fear of falling again into the sphere of Russian influence in the future. Symbolically, the joining of former Warsaw Pact countries confirmed and crystallised the depth of the transformation process and the importance given to it by member states of the Alliance.[40]

The second major round of enlargement took place a few years later. At the Prague Summit in 2002, alliance leaders issued invitations to seven countries to begin accession talks. These were Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.[41] On 29 March 2004, these seven countries formally joined NATO. This was the fifth and biggest round of enlargement in the Alliance's history. The successful and peaceful way in which these countries, especially Latvia, joined the Alliance constitutes proof of the success of the Alliance's policy with regards to achieving two main goals: first, admitting countries of strategic importance; and second, achieving enlargement without igniting Russian concern.

Currently, three candidate countries – Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – are preparing to join the Alliance through their participation in NATO's 'Membership Action Plan' (MAP).[42] This plan was designed to assist and prepare partner countries to meet NATO's membership requirements. It is noteworthy that applicant countries must not be involved in ethnic disputes or external territorial disputes, including irredentist claims or

internal jurisdictional disputes – if so, they must settle their disputes by peaceful means in accordance with OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) principles before they are afforded membership.[43]

It might be asked why the Alliance has been so adamant in pursuing such a policy despite its huge cost; meanwhile there is no major power seeking to challenge the Alliance at present and perhaps in the near future; and – over and above this – no significant military benefits to be gained from admitting these small countries. Basks wonders, 'What conceivable reason is there for maintaining, and expanding, the quintessential anti-Soviet alliance when the Soviet Union no longer exists?'[44] Black considers 'expansion a threatening phenomenon', saying that 'a new world order characterised by a United Nations diminishing in influence and NATO behaving as the world's policeman forces Russian policy planners to rethink their place in the world'.[45]

The official position is found in the 1995 'NATO Study on Enlargement', which reached the conclusion that enlargement 'is of great importance to the Alliance and is a crucial and fundamental step towards achieving a more stable and secure Euro-Atlantic region'.[46] The study confirmed that enlargement would lead to:

> Encouraging and supporting democratic reforms, including the establishment of civilian and democratic control over military forces; fostering patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation and consensus-building characteristic of relations among members of the Alliance; and promoting good-neighbourly relations.[47]

The study further indicated that 'the process would increase transparency in defence planning and military budgets, thereby reinforcing confidence among states, and would intensify the overall tendency toward closer integration and cooperation in Europe'.[48] It also concluded that enlargement would increase the Alliance's ability to contribute to European and international security, and strengthen and broaden the transatlantic partnership. Auton underlines that 'enlargement has been seen as indication of NATO's continued vitality and relevance'.[49]

In assessing this process, first and foremost is the achievement of the Alliance's undeclared target of containing and encircling Russia. It is important to bear in mind that Russia remains one of world's great powers, still possessing the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world as well as all the natural resources that will enable it to retain weight in the international arena in the future.[50]

From an American perspective, enlargement might also serve, in the long run, as a catalyst weakening the weight and role of major European powers – specifically the German–French axis – by allowing 'new' and largely pro-US and European countries to influence decision making. Nonetheless, nothing can guarantee that these counties will not change their orientation in the future, once they get absorbed or completely integrated into a unified Europe. Brenner suggests that 'in the long run, a progressive Europeanisation of NATO is inevitable'.[51]

The enlargement process has achieved its desired aims of successfully embracing new members, alleviating the suspicions of sceptics and dispelling the bad

memories of historic hostilities. In addition, containing Russia and giving more 'added value' in the way of new supporting members will almost certainly enable NATO to deter, or even prevent, more efficiently any uncalculated move from another great power, such as China, in the future.

New confirmation of the success of this process of enlargement was gained during the 2006 Riga Summit. Paragraph 29 indicates that:

> NATO's ongoing enlargement process has been an historic success in advancing stability, peace and cooperation in Europe and the vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace. In keeping with our pledge to maintain an open door to the admission of additional Alliance members in the future, we reaffirm that NATO remains open to new European members under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty.[52]

Also, Paragraph 30 states, 'At our next summit in 2008, the Alliance intends to extend further invitations to those countries that meet NATO's performance-based standards and are able to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security and stability'.[53]

Partnership for Peace

The second major mechanism introduced by the transformation process was the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme launched at the 1994 Brussels Summit. Its declared aim was similar to that of the enlargement process – i.e. enhancing stability and security throughout Europe – although it has been different in influence, impact and scope. Since its inception, the programme has been addressed to all states that were members of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, currently called the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, as well as all member states participating in the OSCE, that were ready and able to contribute in a positive manner to the programme's activities.[54]

Although membership of this programme can qualify or enable partners to join the Alliance in the future, there is no guarantee that partners will get membership automatically. In practice, 30 countries have joined PFP since its creation in 1994; 10 of which have since become members of the Alliance. In addition, although the programme focuses on defence issues, it gives no security guarantee for partners. However, the Alliance undertakes to consult with any active partner if there is a serious threat against its safety, its territorial integrity or political independence. In return, partners must pledge to cooperate in fulfilling the aims and objectives of the programme, which are: to facilitate transparency in national defence planning and budgeting processes; to ensure the democratic control of defence forces; to maintain the capability and readiness to contribute to operations under the authority of the United Nations and/or the responsibility of OSCE; to develop cooperative military relations with NATO for the purpose of joint planning, training and exercises with the aim of strengthening their ability to undertake missions in the field of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; and to develop, over the longer term, forces that are able to work with the Alliance's forces.

The scope for cooperation is wide and covers a spectrum of possibilities; this enables each partner to choose the activities that suit its needs and abilities. These activities include air defence related matters; airspace management and control; consultation, command and control, interoperability aspects, procedures and terminology; civil emergency planning; crisis management; democratic control of forces and defence structures; defence planning, budgeting and resource management; planning, organisation and management of national defence procurement programmes and international cooperation in the armament field; defence policy and strategy; planning, organisation and management of national defence research and technology; military geography; global humanitarian mine action; language training; consumer logistics; medical services; meteorological support for NATO-partner forces; military infrastructure; NBCV (narrow-band coherent video) defence and protection; conceptual planning and operational aspects of peacekeeping; small arms and light weapons; operational, material and administrative aspects of standardisation; military exercise and related training activities; and military education, training and doctrine.

Additionally, NATO has introduced a cooperative science programme that supports collaboration between scientists from allied and partnership countries.[55]

Within the same framework, and to meet the required end, the Alliance created another institutionalised forum – the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)[56] in order to facilitate regular consultations on political and security issues between NATO members and their partners (all together 46 countries), and allow them collectively and individually to consider possibilities of cooperation. The main objective of this mechanism is to convince or entice governments to reform their policies to be in conformity with the most successful growing military organisation worldwide, by taking into account that refusing to cooperate with the Alliance's policies or proposals will lead to marginalisation.

Similar to the enlargement process, the PFP mechanism has been running in full consistency with liberal institutionalism with all its basic assumptions and principles, especially those related to the impact of ideas and individual perceptions as well as the countless opportunities of cooperation through institutions. Indicatively, the logic lying behind this process was to engage East European countries in constant consultations, deliberations and talks about mutual security concerns with an aim to facilitating the smooth and efficient dissemination of information, ideas and concepts. This could, on the one hand, enrich trust and confidence and, on the other hand, diminish threats or hostile attitudes.

In time, the process might – as it was envisaged – build a satisfactory level of confidence necessary to conduct certain cooperative security activities. This factor of disseminating necessary and accurate information, through institutions, should be given due attention and significance because ill informed regimes might have a catastrophic impact on world security via miscalculation. Kolodziej indicates that 'knowledge based on the patterned behaviour of a state over time allegedly pierces the shroud of secrecy and misperception surrounding state exchanges. Greater transparency bolsters the confidence of decision-makers that cooperation will not be exploited'.[57]

Also, being an alliance – or an institution – of democratic states might encourage reluctant countries to join the process in preparation for an advanced form of cooperation in the future. In all events, there is always the possibility of achieving more progress by the way of deepening and widening existing cooperation among states concerned. In this respect, the liberal institutionalist theory holds that states will enter into cooperative relations even if some states gain more from the interaction than others. This implies that absolute gains are more important than relative gains in guiding state behaviour and collaboration. This was evident in the process, as some partners have taken up membership of NATO while others have not.

As the following chapters illustrate, some tools and guidelines of PFP have been recently used to enhance the NATO–Middle East cooperative relationship.

The Mediterranean/Middle Eastern dimension

In recent years, the Alliance has increasingly recognised the importance of its Southern periphery. This growing recognition can be traced in declarations issued by the two strategic concepts, as well as in successive summits. The 1994 Brussels Summit, underlined, after noting positive developments in the Middle East, the need for 'opening the way to consider measures to promote dialogue, understanding and confidence-building between the countries in the region' and encouraged 'all efforts conducive to strengthening regional stability'.[58] Following this, NATO foreign ministers declared, in a meeting the same year, the readiness of the Alliance 'to establish contacts, on a case-by-case basis, between the alliance and Mediterranean non-member countries with a view to contributing to the strengthening of regional stability'.[59] In short, the Alliance has conducted the 13-year dialogue in order to achieve certain aims, such as enhancing cooperation and addressing misperceptions. These efforts are discussed fully in Chapter 3.

Post-9/11 developments in NATO

Efforts to rejuvenate NATO have acquired new urgency in the post-9/11 world. In short, the Alliance has an opportunity to prove its validity and ability to perform an indispensable role in securing the Euro-Atlantic region. Arguably, 9/11 was a turning point in NATO's history. Nakic argues that the first phase of NATO's history ended with the end of the Cold War; the second phase started with its involvement in the Balkans. The era of 'new' NATO, he argues, has started with the events of 9/11 and it is expected to last a similar period of the decades long Cold War.[60]

In the post-9/11 summits – Prague 2002, Istanbul 2004 and Riga 2006 – the allies displayed a determination to accelerate NATO's transformation process to maximise the Alliance's ability to deal with new threats in a changed world, including terrorism first and foremost. Before reviewing the outcome of the three summits, it is worth clarifying that the last two summits demonstrated the resolve of allies to continue moving forwards together and surmount differences that had

erupted between them over the 2003 Iraq crisis. As this book illustrates, liberal institutionalism has had a direct impact on post-9/11 developments as well.

The Prague Summit

Although reference was frequently made to terrorism in most of the documents published from the beginning of NATO's transformation process, it was listed among NATO's top priorities at the Prague Summit of 21–22 November 2002 – the first ordinary summit convened after the 9/11 attacks. To some, it appeared as if the Alliance was looking for justification for its continuation. Cornish expresses the conviction that without holding a well defined and shared assessment with regards to an external threat to the security of the Euro-Atlantic community, NATO could not be more than an 'alliance of choice' rather than an 'alliance of necessity'.[61]

To illustrate, the heads of state and government reconfirmed at this summit their determination to combat terrorism, stating in Paragraph 4 (sections d, e and f) of the declaration that 'terrorism poses a grave and growing threat to alliance populations, forces and territory as well as to international security; we are determined to combat this scourge for as long as necessary'.[62] Allied states stressed that their response must be multi-faceted and comprehensive, including:

> Commitment, in cooperation with partners, to fully implement the Civil Emergency Planning (CEP) Action Plan for the improvement of civil preparedness against possible attacks against the civilian population with chemical, biological or radiological (CBR) agents; enhancing ability to provide support, when requested, to help national authorities to deal with the consequences of terrorist attacks with CBRN against critical infrastructure, as foreseen in the CEP Action Plan; endorsing the implementation of five nuclear, biological and chemical weapons defence initiatives and improving expeditiously the NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) defence capabilities; strengthening the available capabilities to defend against cyber attacks.[63]

These selected activities should not lead to the conclusion that the Alliance is to concentrate only on defensive or precautionary measures. In fact, the Alliance has developed, for the first time, what could be described as a radical change in the structure of its forces. In response to a US request, Paragraph 4a indicates that:

> NATO allies have decided to create a NATO Response Force (NRF) consisting of a technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed, as decided by the council … First, it will provide a high-readiness force able to move quickly to wherever it may be required to carry out the full range of Alliance missions; second, it will be the catalyst for focusing and promoting improvements in the alliance's military capabilities

> and, more generally, for their continuing transformation to meet evolving security challenges.[64]

In October 2006, the force reached its full operational capability with about 25,000 troops.[65]

The use of this force, which practically speaking cannot be separated from the Alliance's preparedness to deal with terrorism or any states sponsoring or harbouring terrorist groups, will not be linked to – or necessarily abide by – considerations of international legitimacy and law. Rather it will be used 'as decided by the council'.[66] Added to this, operations of the force will not be limited to the Euro-Atlantic area, but outside it as well, which is a major development in this regard. This force is also confirming the precedence of NATO's capabilities over any other military entity worldwide.

Commenting on this, Cehulic explains that by launching this proposal, i.e. the establishment of the NRF, the United States was seeking to reduce the significance of the growing European Security and Defence identity within NATO, and provide the Alliance with an effective tool that could be used, whenever and wherever necessary, on the international scale.[67]

At the Riga Summit, it was declared, in Paragraph 23 that '[The NATO Response Force] also serves as a catalyst for transformation and interoperability and will enhance the overall quality of our armed forces, not only for NATO, but also for EU, UN or national purposes'.[68]

This was an attempt to internationalise the purpose, aims and tasks of this force. Furthermore, allies approved a two-fold long-term approach for achieving the required transformation of alliance troops. In Paragraph 4b, allies approved an outline plan for a leaner, more efficient and effective command structure, based on the agreed 'Minimum Military Requirements' document,[69] while in Paragraph 4c allies approved the Prague Capabilities Commitments (PCC) 'as part of the continuing Alliance effort to improve and develop new military capabilities for modern warfare in a high threat environment [while] highlighting the need for implementation as quickly as possible'.[70]

According to the Prague Capability Commitments, individual allies made strong commitments to improve their capabilities in more than 400 specific areas, including defence against mass destruction and radiological weapons, intelligence and surveillance. The assigned tasks would include:

> Defending common values; respect for democracy and human rights; combating international terrorism and the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; building security bridges with Russia and Ukraine; further developing the basis for close cooperation with other countries … and, when other avenues have been exhausted, acting as an effective instrument for managing crises and ensuring that the effects of conflict do not spill over borders or threaten wider stability.[71]

This ongoing military readiness fits with liberal institutionalism insofar as it reflects the preparedness to use force to protect the interests of liberal society. However, mention must be made that liberal institutionalism itself does not permit or grant a self-given mandate to use force when the Alliance decides, without resorting to international institutions or legitimacy. Therefore, some traces of realist thinking could be found in this respect. Seemingly, strategic planners of the Alliance realised that chaotic, violent forms of terrorism, particularly in the post-9/11 years, necessitates the resort to force whenever and wherever necessary.

What is more, the allies decided in Paragraph 7 to upgrade cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace initiative, introducing new practical mechanisms, such as 'Individual Partnership Action Plans', which 'Ensure a comprehensive, tailored and differentiated approach to the partnership, and encourage partners, including the countries of the strategically important region of Caucasus and Central Asia to take advantage of these mechanisms'.[72]

In addition, they also invited seven countries to become members of the Alliance. Then, in Paragraph 10, allies outlined their decision to upgrade substantially the political and practical dimensions of the Mediterranean Dialogue.[73] In doing so, the Alliance was trying to maximise its ongoing cooperation with others to achieve two intertwined goals: first, continued internationalisation of its role; and second, better preparation to face common threats. Again, this runs parallel to the core concepts of liberal institutionalism that underline the importance of fostering cooperation among international actors to achieve mutual interests.

Finally, in response to the growing threat from the Middle East region, it was mentioned in Paragraph 4g that the allies agreed 'To examine options for addressing the increasing missile threat to Alliance territory, forces and population centers in an effective and efficient way through an appropriate mix of political and defence efforts, along with deterrence'.[74]

The Istanbul Summit

The Istanbul summit, held 28–29 June 2004, was the first summit convened after the 2003 Iraq war. It crystallised the enduring commitment of allies to maintaining the Alliance and underlined their determination to face and deter standing threats with the most appropriate and concerted policies. This summit was a watershed in the evolution of the Alliance, given its broad-based approach to NATO's policies and transformation mechanisms.

Terrorism was given special emphasis at this summit. The European allies needed to show more determination and commitment to combating terrorism, particularly after explosions in Madrid and Istanbul in the preceding months. At this time, there was no reason not to show as much understanding and tolerance as possible of robust American policy in this regard. Therefore, it could be argued that the terrorists attacks of Madrid and Istanbul, in a similar way to the 9/11 attacks, rendered the Alliance more coherent and helped to repair, to a great extent, the rift which had occurred as a result of the causes and consequences of the 2003 Iraq war.

Broadly speaking, in Istanbul, the allies agreed to expand their area of interest, as well as the scope of NATO operations, boost the transformation of the Alliance's capabilities and upgrade existing relationships with relevant countries on their peripheries. The most important outcomes of this summit could be summarised as follows:

1 Terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery were identified as posing key threats and challenges to the interests of the Alliance, as well as to international security (Paragraph 12).[75] This was the clearest indication to date that the Alliance had re-identified its main tasks in such a manner as to ensure its effectiveness in facing either threat, or a deadly combination of the two. Paragraph 13 also showed this, stating that 'the alliance provides an essential transatlantic dimension to the response against terrorism'. In the same context, it was also stated that 'we are committed to continue our struggle against terrorism in all its forms, in accordance with international law provisions and UN principles'.[76] Reference was also made to United Nations Resolution 1373 in the fight against terrorism. Notwithstanding, an ambiguous formulation was included in the same paragraph. It stated that:

   - Defence against terrorism may include activities by NATO's military forces, based on decisions by the North Atlantic Council, to deter, disrupt, defend and protect against terrorist attacks, or threat of attacks, directed from abroad, against populations, territory, infrastructure and forces of any member state, including by acting against these terrorists and those who harbour them.[77]
   - This formula almost overlapped or abrogated the preceding reference to international law and UN principles by stating that the 'defence decisions will be taken by the North Atlantic Council', not by the authorisation of the Security Council. What should be borne in mind here is that 'defence' sometimes requires, according to the 2002 American strategy for national security,[78] 'anticipation' and launching pre-emptive strikes to abort what are perceived to be sources of threats. Increasingly, NATO has abandoned the necessity of coping with or adhering by the rules of international legitimacy in the case of imminent threats.
   - Dombrowski and Rayne assert that there is an emerging consensus for pre-emptive actions. They indicate that NATO has adopted a two-fold concept of the use of military forces in dealing with the danger of terrorism that includes 'defensive anti-terrorism' that is supposed to reduce vulnerabilities and increase the ability to manage the consequences of any terrorist attack; and 'offensive counter-terrorism' that entails direct military intervention to weaken terrorist networks by targeting their capabilities.[79]

2 At the Istanbul Summit, the Alliance also added new dimensions to its strategy on combating terrorism, using different diplomatic, political and military

means. The declared measures included: improved intelligence sharing between nations; enhanced abilities to respond rapidly to national requests for assistance in protecting against and dealing with the consequences of terrorist attacks; providing assistance in protecting selected major events; enhancing contribution to the fight against terrorism by Operation Active Endeavour; exerting robust effort in the Balkans and Afghanistan to help create conditions in which terrorism cannot flourish; enhancing capabilities to defend against terrorist attacks; and increasing cooperation with partners, through the implementation of the Civil Emergency Action Plan, the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism and contact with other international and regional organisations, such as the active pursuit of consultations and exchange of information with the European Union.[80]

3 Coupled with this, there was more emphasis placed on the issue of weapons of mass destruction, which were not to be tolerated. The final document set out in detail certain measures that would be taken in this regard, including Supporting NPT (the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) and ensuring the full compliance with it by all states party to the treaty; underlining the importance of other relevant international accords; supporting United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1540 which called on all states to establish national export control, etc.; strengthening reduction and safeguarding nuclear and radiological materials; and preventing and containing proliferation of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) and their means of delivery.[81]

4 The correlation and connectedness between the danger of terrorism and the region of the Middle East could be found in Paragraph 10. It stated that 'NATO's maritime surveillance and escort operation, Operation Active Endeavour, demonstrates the Alliance's resolve and ability to respond to terrorism',[82] with an indication that 2004 had witnessed the extension of the operation to the whole of the Mediterranean. What is worth highlighting here is that although this operation, to all intents and purposes, is going on with the cooperation of some Mediterranean Dialogue partners, there is no international authorisation for such monitoring or intervention.

5 As far as the Middle East region itself is concerned, the document emphasised that it was an opportune time to address the problem of certain conventional weapons, especially missiles able to reach alliance territory.[83] Added to this, it was also declared that a new stage of the relationship between the Alliance and the Middle East in general had begun. More importantly, and fundamentally, the allies had decided to enhance the Mediterranean Dialogue and to propose cooperation in the Broader Middle East region.

6 The Istanbul Summit appeared to affirm that a complex strategic environment requires the continuity of the Alliance, which symbolises and embodies the transatlantic link between North America and Europe. The view was that the Alliance should continue to serve as both an indispensable forum for consultations between member states and an effective instrument to defend peace and security. The document implied, consequently, that there should be no reason for, or logic in, any future rift or differences between European

countries and the United States that could threaten the continuity of the Alliance.

With respect to the relationship between the Alliance and the European Union, Paragraph 26 stated that 'we are pleased with the progress made in developing the NATO–EU strategic partnership on the basis of and since the conclusion of the Berlin+arrangement'.[84] The allies also gave assurances that the two entities were cooperating on a wide range of topics, including security matters, and would continue to do so. According to the 'Berlin plus formula', precedence should always be given to NATO; the Europeans can only assume duties, using their own 'European security and defence identity', in those crises that NATO does not wish to handle. This has been tested recently in the Darfur crisis.

7 The view also prevailed that the Alliance was pursuing, and would continue to pursue, its global and holistic approach in dealing with security issues through different mechanisms, including first and foremost the partnership initiative, which had a wide geographical scope extending from the Caucasus and Central Asia to the 'Broader' Middle East.[85] In its global role, NATO was, and still is, seeking to antagonise nobody, according to this document. On the contrary, the Alliance would welcome more cooperative and productive relationships with Russia and others. As a demonstration of good faith, the allies agreed to allow 'partners' to increase their contribution to NATO-led operations and participate, to some extent, in the decision-making process.

The Alliance would also provide them with additional help to reform their militaries, in accordance with NATO's criteria. The newly established Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building aims to assist partners to build democratic defence institutions.[86] Again, the implications of the document seemed to be that 'cooperation' was the preferred, if not the 'only available', basis on which others could deal with the Alliance, bearing in mind the Alliance's non-hostile stance. The message was reinforced that the allies were making the utmost effort to ensure that their alliance was the most influential and important security organisation in the world. In doing this, the Alliance seemed keen to provide itself with more 'magnetic power' to attract partners, while pushing them to increase their efforts to develop their policies in such a way that they served the interests of the Alliance.

8 At the Istanbul Summit, allies seemed keen to underline that the transformation process was progressing positively, with the Alliance attempting to adapt as fast as it could. For example, NATO's door was to remain open to new members, especially Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.[87] Also, it is noticeable that emphasis was given to the words 'wherever' and 'whenever', to underline the new extent of the global role of the Alliance.[88]

Broadly speaking, the summit underlined the importance of deepening and widening areas of cooperation on various levels: allies, European partners, Middle Eastern partners, and others, consistent with the core concepts of liberal institutionalism. It did, at the same time, reinforce the trend

that authorises NATO to use force upon its own decision and assessment. Apart from this, the advanced forms of cooperation presented by the summit confirmed the 'progressive' nature of ongoing cooperation as identified by liberal institutionalism that argues that cooperation would lead to more cooperation; that institutions by nature can help in this regard by fostering the habits of cooperation, helping actors to familiarise themselves with the governing rules, etc., and facilitating the exchange of information that allows partners to cope with the expectations and/or requirements of others.

The Riga Summit

The Riga Summit in Latvia, 28–29 November 2006, reconfirmed the message of previous summits about the indivisibility of the security of the 26 NATO member states and their determination to pursue common goals together. It gave special emphasis to increasing and developing the scope of existing relationships with non-member states with a view to enhancing the global role of the Alliance. In Paragraph 11, the summit declaration states that:

> NATO's policy of partnerships, dialogue, and cooperation is essential to the alliance's purpose and its tasks. It has fostered strong relationships with countries of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), as well as with Contact Countries. NATO's partnerships have an enduring value, contributing to stability and security across the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. NATO's missions and operations have also demonstrated the political and operational value of these relationships: 18 nations outside the alliance contribute forces and provide support to our operations and missions, and others have expressed interest in working more closely with NATO.[89]

The heads of state and government requested the Council in Permanent Session to further develop this policy of reinforcing all forms of existing partnerships by committing to:

1. Fully develop the political and practical potential of NATO's existing cooperation programmes: EAPC/Partnership for Peace, MD and ICI, and its relations with Contact Countries, in accordance with the decisions of our Istanbul Summit.
2. Increase the operational relevance of relations with non-NATO countries, including interested Contact Countries; and in particular to strengthen NATO's ability to work with those current and potential contributors to NATO operations and missions who share our interests and values.
3. Increase NATO's ability to provide practical advice on, and assistance in, the defence and security-related aspects of reform in countries and regions where NATO is engaged.[90]

Moreover, the 2006 Riga Summit called for the continuation of defence policy and operations transformation in order to increase the efficiency of the Alliance's forces in deterring twenty-first century contingencies. Member states endorsed a set of initiatives to this effect.[91]

Again, reference was made to the point that 'our operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans confirm that NATO needs modern, highly capable forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed upon decision by the NAC (North Atlantic Council)'.[92] It seemed clearer than ever that 'decision by the NAC' is the most important – if not the only – factor in determining the Alliance's moves on the world stage. Obviously, the summit granted more weight and credibility to the outcome of the previous two summits. More advanced and continued forms of cooperation confirm the utility of liberal institutionalism as a theoretical framework of understanding, as explained earlier.

In sum, the transformation of the North Atlantic Alliance following the end of the Cold War has been significant and fundamental. During the 1990s, starting from the July 1990 London Summit, which heralded a Europe 'whole and free', and culminating in the decisions of the Washington Summit in April 1999, the Alliance made major changes to its composition as well as a tremendous shift in its policies. Another stage of the accelerated transformation process can be seen as beginning after the events of 9/11. The whole process has attempted to ensure that the Alliance remains indispensable for the safety and security of the Euro-Atlantic region. In short, the result has been the maximisation of NATO's strength, enlargement of its scope and globalisation of its role.[93] Yet, there are several arenas that need to be kept in harmony, and a number of issues to be resolved, to ensure the continuing success of the Alliance, among which is the extent to which NATO will adhere to the letter of international law in performing its new global role.

The preceding analytical review can be encapsulated in the following points:

1 The Alliance should no longer be perceived as a purely defensive organisation confined to a limited geographical area – it has recently given itself a dual mandate, i.e. defensive and offensive tasks. This can be understood in the light of NATO's new military concept for defence against terrorism, which underlines the Alliance's readiness:

> To act against terrorist attacks, or the threat of such attacks, directed from abroad against our populations, territory, infrastructure and forces; to provide assistance to national authorities in dealing with the consequences of terrorist attacks; to support operations by the European Union or other international organisations or coalitions involving allies; and to deploy forces as and where required to carry out such missions.[94]

It is worth indicating that the Alliance has declared that 'Military transformation is a long-term endeavour that must continue if NATO is to be able to carry out the full range of its missions, including combating the

threats posed by terrorism, failed states, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction'.[95]

Noting the word 'combating' and the sources of dangers mentioned, this may amount to a clear statement that the allies, at least the majority of them, intend to make their alliance, perhaps in the long run, the policeman of the world, even if they do not wish to declare that publicly.

2 The Alliance has identified terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, besides 'failed states' as the second priority, as its new raison d'être for the twenty-first century, after almost a decade of confused vision. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today's threats and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by the adversaries' choice of weapons, are reason enough for the parties concerned not to sever existing ties, which provide them with the best available means of protection. The events of 11 September 2001 were a massive and unforgettable 'psychological shock' that awoke every Western country to the reality that no country is untouchable. It goes without saying that such fears were intensified by the Madrid, Istanbul and London bombings. The effect of these waves of psychological shock may last for decades and generations. Coupled with this, the existing trend of maximising NATO's role in combating terrorism, which forms part of its comprehensive new strategy, may rule out or at least weaken the arguments of those who cast doubt on the necessity of the Alliance.[96] Irrefutably, NATO's existence serves certain psychological functions, and this matter has been reflected and mirrored in its new roles in securing public events, such as the Olympics in Athens and the Pope's funeral in Rome.

3 The Alliance has assumed a diplomatic role or duties after transforming itself from a military body concerned with defence-related issues to a military–political and security organisation of comprehensive competence and jurisdiction, if self-ordained. This wide-ranging approach will enable NATO to deal, in different ways, with any source of danger or instability that might occur in its area of interest.

4 The importance given to international law and the role of the United Nations has been decreased. The Alliance has come to recognise that it cannot afford to wait for prolonged political consultations and agreements. Although this realisation has a certain logic, it appears that NATO is prepared to set aside due respect for international law and legitimacy, with Kosovo[97] as a precedent.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the most important aspects of the NATO transformation process since the end of the Cold War, it can be emphasised that the whole process confirms the utility of (and conforms to) the chosen theoretical framework – liberal institutionalism – underpinned by certain positive convictions, such as trust in human nature; that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual; that security can be improved by creating shared interests; and that

institutions can have a role in fostering cooperative habits among states. In general, the two strategic concepts were the basis of a significant shift in NATO doctrine, implemented and developed since the end of the Cold War. This significant change rendered NATO not only a military alliance entitled to defend the Euro-Atlantic territories, but also a new venue or mechanism for conducting cooperative security activities between allies and partners, though not necessarily on an equal footing.

Evidently, the enlargement process and Partnership for Peace mechanism were, and still are, clear reflections of liberal institutionalism in practice, or where theory inspired NATO in creating its new global role.

Furthermore, the conclusive impact of the post-9/11 summits has gone in parallel with the core of the two strategic concepts. The only exception that contradicts the chosen theoretical framework is the noticeable degree of deviation away from the necessary adherence to international law. Also relevant is the growing 'offensive' – not only defensive – posture taken by NATO towards terrorism, especially in the post-9/11 years. In essence, this growing trend has been inspired or encouraged by post-9/11 US policies, most of which have run in parallel with realism and its core concepts, which argues that the anarchical nature of the international arena makes necessary the embrace of unilateral policies, including the use of force.

It can now be surmised that NATO's relevance to the Middle East is based on and determined by the following factors:

1 The holistic approach of the transformation process has been flexible enough to increase tremendously the importance and weight given to the Middle East region, especially in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11. Without doubt, the region has become the top priority of the Alliance for many reasons, among which are that the Middle East is one of the nearest peripheries to Euro-Atlantic territories and is beset by problems that constitute key concerns for the West – i.e. terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the prospect of a proliferation of failed states. The North Atlantic Alliance has come to recognise the necessity of addressing the region in order to take a role in resolving its security problems.
2 The new 'transformed' NATO has become a political, military and security alliance. Currently, it possesses various tools that could be used in the security environment in the Middle East. It could establish security and military ties with some Middle Eastern countries that take into consideration the main concerns of the United States and its European allies. Furthermore, NATO, as an agent of political change – as has been evident in the enlargement and Partnership for Peace processes with East and Central European countries – is an appropriate tool to be used by allies to assert influence and to help in changing the politico–security environment of the region. Chubin, Green and Larrabee take note that 'NATO [is] increasingly focused on crisis management and so-called non-article V threats; that is, threats that did not involve a direct attack on NATO territory'.[98]

Strada in interview mentions that the concept of positive engagement that NATO has used with East and Central European countries in the post-Cold War era has been remarkable in the sense that it has inspired and encouraged competent authorities in these countries to take hard measures in the way of reform and democratisation. As for the Middle East, he comments that 'The main concept is being applied, which is "positive engagement", but taking into account the differences between the two regions. I do think that NATO can play a very positive role in modernising the region by conveying some of its expertise to its Middle Eastern partners. In my assessment, NATO has adopted a balanced approach and this could help in achieving very good results'.[99]

3 As illustrated earlier, NATO's approach towards the region could include one or more of its three main methods: dialogue, cooperation and deterrence. As the following chapters explain, the three methods are being applied, in varying degrees, in handling the Middle Eastern issues.

In sum, the vast transformation process NATO has undergone has made NATO, in its new form, a consummate tool that could be used by allies to accelerate and/or impose Western-desired changes in the Middle East sphere. This would, certainly, back up other international initiatives reviewed in the previous chapter. Arguably, the watershed, or turning point of the NATO–Middle East relationship was the events of 9/11. This can be verified in the following two chapters by comparing NATO's role in the region before and after 9/11, respectively.

3 NATO's role in the Middle East before 9/11

As clarified earlier, the current role of the North Atlantic Alliance in the Middle East region consists of three main aspects: NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue (with its various practical cooperative activities, including operation 'Active Endeavour' that is mandated to inspect ships and combat terrorist activities in the Mediterranean Sea); the newly launched ICI to foster cooperation between NATO and Arab Gulf countries; and finally, NATO's supportive role towards select regional issues (mainly Darfur and Iraq).

This chapter reviews and analyses the role of the Alliance in the Middle East region before 9/11. From the 1994 Brussels Summit to 9/11, the role of NATO, in this respect, was limited to ongoing security dialogue with some Mediterranean countries. This dialogue is known as the Mediterranean Dialogue process. The following shows that the process under investigation was informed and evolved based on the principles of liberal institutionalism reviewed earlier. This can be verified by identifying the core objectives of the process, its evolution and its governing principles, bearing in mind that MD was taking advantage of the new – as well as somewhat positive – international atmosphere that prevailed in the immediate post-Cold War years.

NATO–MD: background and objectives

Inception and reasons

To be sure, NATO had always paid attention to the Mediterranean Sea and its various security calculations. More precisely, it had perceived the area of Mediterranean as a venue for the possible confrontation between the East and the West during the long decades of the Cold War. Musu explains that 'the area constituted the "Southern flank" of the Alliance and the essential West–East corridor through which to project power across the Middle East and Central Asia, and had to be protected from Soviet penetration'.[1]

Mention should also be made that importance given to this area varied from one period to another because of the changing nature of existing threats and various security and strategic calculations. According to Masala, the NATO–Mediterranean relationship can be divided into three main stages: the first started

with the ratification of the founding Washington Treaty in 1949 that included a reference to Algeria as a part of France; the second extended from the period of decolonisation to the end of the Cold War. The third stage, he argues, is the post-Cold War era that witnesses a growing importance for the region, foremost because of the rise of what he calls 'Islamic extremism', the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and various demographic pressures.[2]

The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent disappearance of the Eastern bloc has enabled a post-Cold War NATO to give more attention to its interests in the South, bearing in mind the ramifications of the Gulf War in 1991 and the start of what was called by forner President Bush Sr, the 'new world order', which meant, precisely, the era of the uni-polar system. Coping with this, the peripheries of the Euro-Atlantic territories were identified by NATO as areas of importance. Santis observes that post-Cold War NATO has enlarged its area of strategic interest to include the South and East Mediterranean, as well as South-Eastern Europe up to the Caucasus.[3]

More recently, a post-9/11 NATO has given more attention to developments in territories close at hand, if out of area, which are likely to affect its security. This new 'reaching out' approach has had a direct impact on the Mediterranean region, which is an integral part of the Wider Middle East, according to NATO's security calculations. Therefore, it could be claimed, contrary to what some might think, that the attention given by the Alliance to the Broader Middle East region was not a direct result of the events of 9/11, but rather goes back to the early 1990s. More specifically, NATO's engagement in Middle Eastern affairs has been one aspect of its huge transformation process.

This idea of engagement was first developed in consultation between the Alliance's North Mediterranean member states, Spain, Italy and Portugal, in the early 1990s. (A.C.), a representative of Spain in interview, discloses that Solana, the ex-foreign minister of Spain and ex-secretary general of NATO, activated and pushed the proposal of launching a security cooperation between the North Atlantic Alliance and some South Mediterranean countries in order to complement or add the 'security dimension' to the other dimensions of the Barcelona Process, which was previously launched when he was foreign minister of Spain, to foster political and economic cooperation between European and South Mediterranean countries.[4]

Consequently, it was decided at the 1994 Brussels Summit to formalise NATO's new orientation towards the South Mediterranean region. The first practical step was launching NATO's dialogue initiative with some countries on the Southern flank of the Mediterranean, namely Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan in 1995, and Algeria in 2000. The selection of these countries and exclusion of others could be understood in light of the level of interaction between the countries with NATO allies, bilaterally and multilaterally in other international forums. In effect, NATO allies invited those countries that normally demonstrated moderate policies vis-à-vis Western interests and held a favourable attitude towards – and understanding of – the necessities of security cooperation with the West. The inclusion of Israel in this process was decided as a result of certain pressure from the United States.

Winrow clarifies that only three countries were supposed to be involved in the early stage of the process, namely Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, but 'as the United States gradually warmed to the idea of the dialogue, the Clinton administration strongly advocated that Israel also be invited'.[5]

Giving attention to the Mediterranean dimension stemmed from recognition that there are huge security challenges, areas of concern and areas of interest that should be cautiously handled through cooperative relationships. Lord Robertson in interview states that the two parties to the process, NATO and South Mediterranean countries, were aware of and convinced by the potential benefits of the process; besides, 'the Alliance thought that this process would enable it to "produce influence" in the region in such a manner that could serve its interests'.[6] Noting the words 'produce influence', this could hint that the alliance was of the view that its own security could be improved by creating common interests with MD countries in such a way that would enable it to get involved in this terrain. This vision is located at the core of liberal institutionalism that assumes that mutual cooperation could enhance security for everyone – i.e. it is not a zero-sum game.

From the perspective of NATO, there were, and still are, many security factors that had made the establishment of such a cooperative mechanism imperative or at least of great importance. These include the perceived threats of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and many potential factors of internal instability as well as the outbreak of regional and international conflicts. Also, it was realised that there was a need to build confidence between the two parties, based on the conviction that mistrust might exacerbate the security environment in the region. Kydd highlights, 'The possibility that conflict may result from exaggerated perception of hostility makes the issue of reassurance important'.[7] At this point, it is worth noting that liberal institutionalism vehemently underlines the importance of providing the various parties with necessary and accurate information in order to build trust and avoid misjudgements and miscalculations that might threaten regional security.

For more elaboration, Lord Robertson identifies six main reasons that make the Mediterranean an area of concern to NATO:

> The first reason is, of course, its potential of instability, bearing in mind that many crises that affected NATO have in one way or the other originated in and around the Mediterranean; the second reason is terrorism, especially with taking into account that the region, because of its many unresolved political, social and religious questions, is particularly prone to this menace; the third reason because it is the region that encompasses the Middle East; and without a breakthrough in the Middle East Peace Process, a major obstacle to normalising Western relations with the Arab world will remain; the fourth reason is that several countries in the Mediterranean region are widely believed to be acquiring weapons of mass destruction; the fifth reason is energy security, as 65 per cent of Europe's oil and natural gas imports pass through the Mediterranean sea which some 3000 ships cross every day; the sixth reason is

> economic disparities and their close connection to migration, underlining that since 1986 per capita income in the Middle East and North African countries has fallen by two per cent annually, whereas population growth in the region is 2.5 per cent per year.[8]

Lord Robertson concluded by underscoring the fact that, irrespective of the various definitions of this diverse and complicated region, the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean could not be artificially separated. Noting the phrase that Lord Robertson mentioned, 'without a breakthrough in the Middle East Peace Process, a major obstacle to normalising Western relations with the Arab world will remain', this reveals that NATO perceived, in spite of the various cooperative channels that combine the West and the Arab world, that there is still a huge difficulty that constantly causes friction between the two sides, which is the Arab–Israeli conflict. Also referring to 'the Arab world' confirms that what is meant by the 'Mediterranean' at that time was the group of Arab countries, not Israel that is sometimes perceived as a Western country.

In addition to the reasons of concern clarified by Lord Robertson, one should not underestimate other factors, such as 'demography, and population whose rate of growth outpaces the ability of economics to provide jobs and populations; environmental challenges, which bring into question the sustainability of their economic growth, seen most urgently in the competition for water resources; etc'.[9] Deputy Secretary General Rizzo points out that 'Many experts predict that the struggle for water could become one of the main sources for conflict in the twenty-first century; and the Mediterranean region is very much affected by this challenge'.[10]

The acceptance of the above mentioned countries to join the MD process was an expression of their acknowledgement that, in the post-Cold War era, the growing prominence of Mediterranean security was – and still is – dictating that they should cooperate in good faith for the sake of their individual and mutual interests. Certainly, these mutual interests include guaranteeing the free and secure flow of oil, taking into account that a large proportion of crude oil comes from the wider region that includes the Middle East and Gulf States, and is regularly transported across the Mediterranean, which also contains the major pipeline that links North Africa with Southern Europe. Over and above this, there are countless and inseparable political and economic ties among countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. This belief in the fruitful results of security cooperation between NATO and MD countries is good evidence of the applicability of liberal institutionalism in this context, as the two parties were convinced that achieving each one's security would not be at the expense of the other; that this cooperation would, presumably, reduce the anarchy and intensity of the regional security environment.

At the same time, it seems that the two parties (NATO and the Mediterranean partners) have also recognised that there are other areas in which their interests and values might be significantly different, as is clarified below.

Before moving on, observation could be made that the inclusion of Mauritania, at the outset, and Jordan, in the second stage, into the process of

NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue, while they are not coastal countries, confirms that the concept of the Mediterranean in NATO's perspective is political. Indeed, the process, since its inception, sought to include those countries that could contribute positively into enhancing the existing relationship between the Euro-Atlantic territories and the South Mediterranean flank, regardless of confined geographical definitions. Also, this indicates that the process itself was the preliminary stage towards building the Middle Eastern policy of the North Atlantic Alliance, in its broader context, in the later stage.

In this respect, Winrow mentions that 'according to NATO officials, there is in practice an overlap between the Mediterranean and the Middle East'.[11] He also hints that from NATO's perspective, the Mediterranean is 'an area where developments may have an impact on the security of Europe, though the boundaries of this Mediterranean area are not defined'.[12]

MD objectives and relevance to the theoretical framework

The declared objectives of the NATO–South Mediterranean Dialogue included contributing positively towards achieving certain general objectives, such as enhancing regional security and stability, improving mutual understanding and dispelling any misconceptions between the Alliance and Mediterranean Dialogue partners.[13]

At this point, it is important to underline the fact that the proposal of Solana (launching the MD process), as well as the above-mentioned objectives, could be best understood in the light of the chosen theoretical framework underpinning this research. To be clear, launching an unprecenteded security dialogue between the Euro-Atlantic zone and the Mediterranean region, in spite of the huge diversity – if not contradiction – of circumstances was firmly based on the conviction that cooperation always remains a possibility, even in security issues, no matter how difficult and complicated the surrounding setting is. In the same context, identifying certain goals, such as improving mutual understanding and dispelling misperceptions as priorities, should not be downplayed, as they could constitute serious attempts to change states' preferences and attitudes in such a way that would enhance the possibility of cooperation in the future.

At the core of the process, the systematic exchange of information was recognised as a necessity or prerequisite mechanism for reducing the level of mistrust between the parties concerned. In addition, fostering a certain form of cooperation between MD partners and the Alliance as an institution worked as an incentive to generate momentum because institutions, by nature, can organise and conduct cooperative activities better than loose relations or individual states. In other words, conducting a security dialogue with NATO, no matter how limited the mandate was, could be considered an advantage afforded to those countries. Reciprocally, holding such a dialogue with MD countries would, certainly, enable NATO to serve its interests in the region. Evidently, this level and nature of cooperation between the two parties is consistent with the basic principles of the theory of liberal institutionalism that state that cooperation can

be realised without the existence of a hegemonic power; that states are the main agents in the international system; that individuals are rational actors knowing how best to serve their interests; and that institutions can facilitate cooperative interaction between concerned states.

Although it began with a very fluid agenda, the MD initiative has steadily widened its scope.

The evolution of the MD process

Certain episodes should be highlighted in the evolution of this dialogue. The first stage of this 'low key' dialogue was characterised by brainstorming about the prospective relationship between NATO and its dialogue partners, and/or a socialising process among officials of the two parties, on different levels, in an attempt to enhance mutual understanding. The meetings, bilaterally and multilaterally, focused mainly on exchanging views and conveying the visions of each side on regional developments, i.e. the Arab–Israeli conflict, Iraq, etc. Also, NATO was keen to inform participants about its internal developments, particularly the transformation process, and orientations towards various security concerns. This process of familiarising terms, perceptions and attitudes continued in the first two years without achieving any significant breakthrough.

After this initial beginning, the leaders of the allied countries decided, at the 1997 Madrid Summit, to establish the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG) to operate under the authority of the North Atlantic Council. But again, no significant result was achieved. Then, the 1999 Washington Summit acknowledged the increasing importance of Mediterranean security, indicating that 'the security of the alliance as a whole, specifically Europe, is closely linked to the security and stability in the region'.[14] In doing so, it decided to give more attention to the ongoing dialogue. Accordingly, the scope of MD was subsequently extended to develop more opportunities for certain cooperative activities in the areas of military, civil emergency and scientific cooperation. Simultaneously, MD countries displayed more readiness to develop relations with NATO in awareness of its policies and mechanisms.[15]

This relative rapprochement between the two parties was evident from the frequent meetings held between different levels of officials, bilaterally or multilaterally, in the format 19+1 and/or 19+7 successively. Besides the frequent visits of opinion formers, such as journalists, academics and parliamentarians, to various NATO institutions and its headquarters in 1999, it was also agreed to establish NATO Contact Point embassies in MD countries, as happened before with Central and Eastern European partners.

Winrow divides the evolution of MD, at this stage, into three periods: the exploratory phase was between February and November 1995, in which preliminary talks between the two parties took place; the second phase between November 1995 and Spring 1997, in which the dialogue was broadened and deepened, with the inclusion of Jordan and presenting practical programmes of cooperation; and a third phase, from 1997 to early 1999, wherein the dialogue has been elevated to

a higher level and given a more visible political profile with discussions largely conducted by the newly established body (MCG).[16]

The cooperative levels between NATO and MD countries

The positive participation of all MD partners confirmed that they were ready, although in varying degrees, to cooperate with the new 'transformed' NATO. This means that there was a mutual conviction about the possibility of holding such a process, and subsequently achieving mutual – but not necessarily equal – benefits for every participant. As was the case in the Partnership for Peace initiative, the different levels of participation shown by MD parties confirms the adequacy and correctedness of liberal institutionalism's assumption that states will enter into cooperative relationships even if another state will gain more from the interaction.

In reality, levels of participation of MD countries have differed from one to another. The outcome of the interviews conducted with NATO's officials within the context of this study indicates that Israel was the most active participant, followed by Algeria and Morocco, whereas Egypt's participation improved gradually. Meanwhile, the participation of Jordan, Tunisia and Mauritania were proper and comparable to their limited capabilities.

Lord Robertson in interview states:

> In my assessment, the effectiveness of the participation of the South Mediterranean countries varied; Egypt was not very active in the early stages, but its participation improved afterward; Morocco and Jordan were more effective – the King of Morocco supported intelligence cooperation with the alliance, especially after the terrorist attacks in Casablanca; and King Abdullah of Jordan showed more interest and attention than others in following alliance activities and policies; Algeria was active – the president of Algeria visited me twice and showed interest in cooperation with NATO in combating terrorism. As for Tunisia and Mauritania, both of them are small countries; therefore, their participation was limited or weak. Israel has always shown a high readiness in cooperating with the alliance in combating terrorism, and it has huge expertise in this regard.[17]

Bin in interview makes a similar assessment, saying:

> The participation of the MD countries was different; Egypt was very cautious in the beginning of the process; it took time to reach a satisfactory level of cooperation. Jordan has always been an active player who is ready to do more, despite the difficulties of its regional position. Algeria has been very active and positive and ready to develop the dialogue in a structural way. Israel, contrary to what some might think, was not active in the early stages. However, it has developed its participation afterwards and presented a number of proposals regarding WMD and defence investment. Morocco was very cautious, like Egypt, at the beginning, but it has changed its attitudes

> significantly in the last two years, after realising that it is in its interest to cooperate faithfully with NATO, not only with the United States. Tunisia was following the others in trying to understand what was going on, but now it is relatively active. Finally, the participation of Mauritania was reasonable, bearing in mind the lack of financial and human resources.[18]

Borgomano in interview indicates that Algeria and Israel were more active than others in this process. She explains that the government of Algeria was keen to get out from international isolation and to engage the international community. It has participated very efficiently in anti-terrorism efforts. As for Israel, she adds, it has long considered itself as a part of the Western community '… and based on its unique relationship with the United States, which had insisted on its admission in the process from the early beginning, it has always been active in launching proposals for cooperation in terrorism and combating the WMD, bearing in mind it has got huge expertise on those fields'.[19]

Another NATO official (K.F.) in interview mentions that Israel was the most active partner, as the Israeli delegations were frequently offering new ideas and proposals for enhancing the relationship. She also indicates that 'the participation of each of Med Dialogue partner was different than each other. Not only this, but also the process was subject to the personal capacities of both NATO's officials and representatives of the Mediterranean countries'.[20]

The usefulness and progressive nature of practical cooperation

As far as practical cooperation is concerned, mention must be made that this parallel track has granted NATO's ongoing political and security dialogue the necessary flexibility to develop gradually. Progress was noticeable, if slow, in the first years. This confirms that cooperation encourages and leads to more productive cooperation; and NATO can help in fulfilling many of the training needs of its MD partners. Additionally, using the political dialogue as a venue to build common understandings paved the way for more successful practical cooperation. Vice versa, more advanced forms of practical cooperation led positively to the sharpening and enhancing of ongoing political dialogue.

In detail, practical cooperation has been organised and conducted through an annual Work Programme, that usually includes more than 140 activities, in order to convey NATO's experience to MD partners in some areas, such as military exercises, medical services, forestalling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, border security, counter-terrorism, airspace control, defence reform, armaments management and protective security, etc. In this respect, a number of forums and courses were held to enrich knowledge about crisis management and civil emergency planning, etc. More importantly, there were some cooperative scientific activities through the NATO Science Programme. NATO documents[21] indicated in 2000, for instance, that 108 scientists from MD countries participated in NATO-sponsored advanced research workshops, advanced study institutes, collaborative research grants and science fellowships.

Added to this, there has been military-to-military cooperation that has developed significantly since 1997, as invitations were extended to a number of military personnel from MD countries to observe or participate in alliance military exercises. Also, frequent visits were made to NATO military bodies; and in the other direction, NATO's Standing Naval Forces paid visits to certain ports in MD countries. At this stage, it is important to underline that it was up to each MD partner to select the activities it wanted to participate in, according to its own needs and requirements.

Winrow argues that despite lacking a proper agenda, practical cooperative activities helped the dialogue to evolve as 'These activities lend to the dialogue a sense of movement and direction'.[22]

Similarly, all those who were interviewed from MD countries within the context of this research, along with other academic experts, confirm that practical cooperation is the most tangible and fruitful result of the whole dialogue process.

Dufourcq in interview comments that practical cooperation has been very useful because it has achieved and enhanced interoperability between the forces of both parties (NATO and MD partners). 'Consequently, there are more chances for future mutual tasks in peace support operations. It is very significant progress to increase the possibility of working together.' He also adds that the various forms of practical cooperation could act as a catalyst for achieving – or at least increasing and strengthening – the potentiality of modernisation on MD partners.[23]

Borgomano in interview agrees that the practical cooperation was useful and did help in conveying NATO's expertise, as 'it has increased interaction between the two parties in different fields. It has increased, for sure, interoperability … facilitated communications, etc'.[24]

Daguzan in interview says, 'I can only see that NATO will continue to grant its partners some of its expertise through [its] various educational programmes. The practical cooperation that is being implemented is quite good and fruitful'.[25] Likewise, a senior official of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (K.E.) in interview mentions that 'the practical cooperation has been more than useful in all its related aspects'.[26]

Certainly, all these activities of practical cooperation have resulted in a harmonising of terminology and procedures, and the enhancement of interoperability and the ability to work together in future operations that might include various tasks like combating terrorism, rescue operations, as well as peacekeeping.

NATO frequently states that the guiding principles governing the MD process are: joint ownership between the two parties; non-discrimination as well as self-differentiation, which means that although the same levels of discussion and activities was afforded to all countries, levels of participation may vary from one country to another; complementarities with other international initiatives; and finally progressiveness, which implies that there is always a room for regular enhancement of the dialogue.[27] These overriding principles conform to liberal institutionalism, which assumes that there is always a possibility of realising 'progress' in the international interactions; that the spirit of joint ownership – e.g. creating common objectives – will facilitate successful cooperative activities.

Additionally, the principle of non-discrimination was essential in the sense that the process underpinned the concept of the unity of humankind (e.g. no discrimination between Arabs and Isrealis in facing common security threats); and where 'self-differentiation' is consistent with the concept of 'absolute gains' mentioned above.

These governing principles have granted the dialogue enough flexibility to develop itself and respond positively to international events in recent years. However, the horizons of the dialogue were, at that time, too limited to allow it to serve efficiently the Alliance's full endeavour in this regard.

Stage one: success or failure?

In assessing the MD initiative from 1995 to 2001, it ought to be mentioned that the nature of the dialogue's aims as well as the scope of its activities make evaluating its effectiveness and efficiency difficult, as they imply that the dialogue itself was envisaged to be merely a path to another stage. Thus, the success or failure of this process should be determined by considering whether or not the required or expected smooth transition to another stage has occurred.

Critics of the process

The MD process was criticised for several reasons, but first and foremost for its inability to achieve any significant improvement in the fragile security environment of the Middle East. In the following views, some scholars as well as interviewees hold the view that the process suffered from many internal and external difficulties. Noticeably, the majority of these arguments did not challenge the benefits of fostering cooperation, as well as other postulates of liberal institutionalism, in the security field. Many ignore, to varying degrees, the fact that surrounding difficulties dictated NATO proceed cautiously – and gradually – in order to avoid provoking anger and worry on the side of its South Mediterranean partners.

Some have criticised the entire process. For instance, Wedcaef observes that MD, contrary to what was being applied with East and Central European countries, was low profile and did not develop to a satisfactory level until after 9/11 because of many internal and external factors, including first and foremost the divergent perceptions of the partners regarding the whole process.[28]

Donnelly maintains that MD did not contribute significantly in stabilising the region. This is because of a lack of proper investment in time, people and money on one hand, and the impact of the negative image of NATO that prevailed in the region on the other hand.[29]

Related, Said notes that the setbacks that occurred in the Middle East peace process led Arab countries to participate half-heartedly in the MD process and, added to that, the objectives of the whole process were not clearly defined.[30]

Bradshaw believes the process has been modest in its overall performance because of the effect of the Israeli–Palestinian dispute on the dialogue, but it has achieved some level of confidence building and stability.[31]

Daguzan in interview refers to the problem of expecting 'more' than necessary from this process. He argues that the process suffered from the lack of a proper and well-defined agenda, 'I mean identifying aims like "understanding and dispelling misperception" is for sure not enough'. He also identifies other surrounding and built-in difficulties that include holding dialogue with people from different backgrounds, besides the vast divergence of perceptions and interests of each country towards the process. That is why, he argues, it should not have been expected that the MD process could lead to any sort of breakthrough in the region.

Daguzan also says, 'The whole process is only adequate and good enough for exchanging information, enhancing understanding between various participants, etc. It will never overpass a certain level. It is tied by both its mandate and existing factors in this complex political atmosphere'.[32]

NATO's current secretary general acknowledges that 'the Dialogue has only achieved the continuation of the Dialogue itself'.[33]

In general, these reviewed arguments do not downplay the importance of building confidence and/or increasing understanding, via information exchange, as envisaged by the process since its inception. Moreover, critics recognise that the process, in spite of all of its shortcomings, did not lead to unfavourable results.

Advocates of the process

Taken altogether, many of the following opinions acknowledge that the systematic exchange of information, as referred to earlier in discussion of the theoretical framework adopted in this research, is of utmost importance to avoid misinterpretations of intentions that might lead, in some cases, to catastrophic consequences. For some, as shall be reviewed below, this is a big achievement, bearing in mind regional complexities as well as the long legacy of mistrust and antagonism between the parties concerned. Also important is to underline that some interviewees consider this process a preliminary stage of a 'progressive' long-term endeavour that would contribute positively in improving the fragile security environment in the Middle East. This, on the one hand, reflects a deep understanding about the region and underlines, on the other hand, the utility and applicability of the chosen theoretical framework of liberal institutionalism.

Contrary to the negative views, some suggest that the dialogue has fulfilled at least some of its main objectives. For instance, the Alliance's assessment of the dialogue indicated that 'it has evolved at a steadily pace in accordance with its progressive character; and the Dialogue's political and practical dimensions have been regularly enhanced'.[34] Similarly, another study conducted by the Alliance in 2003 takes the view that the initiative has served, so far, some useful purposes such as: serving as an indispensable vehicle for information-sharing and dialogue with MD partners; providing a framework for confidence-building measures between the two parties; increasing the possibility of moving from deliberations and talks to practical cooperation; and finally increasing the awareness of both parties of the interdependence and indivisibility of Mediterranean security.[35]

Some views indicate that the process has its own success and failure: that while the MD process achieved some of its objectives, it failed in achieving any significant breakthroughs that could be reflected in an improving regional security environment. In this regard, former Secretary General Lord Robertson commended the evolution of the dialogue, saying:

> Our Mediterranean Dialogue has proved to be very successful. Over the past eight years, the scope of the Dialogue has widened significantly; the number of Dialogue countries has grown from five to seven; political discussions have become more frequent and more intense; the number of cooperative activities has grown from just a few to several hundred. As a result, many misconceptions have been dispelled, and mutual understanding has grown.[36]

Yet Lord Robertson himself in interview admits that 'the idea itself was good, but its results were limited, because of the complications of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict'.[37]

Furthermore, Bin in interview concurs that there was no significant attention from both parties towards the process at this stage, however MD succeeded in conducting consultations, building some confidence and enriching knowledge about each other. He said, 'Now, we have moved from the ambassadorial level to ministerial level. Certainly, this is evidence of seriousness and the change in attitudes and increase in confidence'.[38]

In the same vein, Hardouin in interview confirms the usefulness of MD in enriching knowledge about the other, and also allowing MD partners to know about themselves. He mentions, 'it was a good vehicle to dispel some misperceptions about NATO's role and intentions. I don't agree with those who had exaggerated about the potential of the whole process. Certainly, it was not supposed to achieve the long missing stability in this troubled region'.[39]

Dufourcq in interview asserts that the process has achieved certain success with regards to achieving its simple objectives such as building confidence and dispelling misperception, saying that 'the process was taking gradual steps in enhancing cooperation between the two parties, NATO and South Mediterranean countries, bearing in mind the inherent difficulties and surrounding circumstances, mainly the complexities of the region itself'. He also mentions that the process was suffering from the lack of proper tools that were given to other initiatives, like PFP, and an adequate political structure.[40]

Similarly, Borgomano in interview comments that only partial success was achieved, and the process itself was very fragmented and lacking a proper political agenda. She also adds that 'NATO is perceived to be equal to the United States, and this is a big problem for its performance in the region'.[41]

Aliboni in interview asserts that the NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue as a collective endeavour has proven to be very modest and definitely fell short of expectations. However, he also adds that it proved more successful from a bilateral point of view, as 'A number of governments (e.g. the Algerian government) have taken advantage of the dialogue to improve the training and armament of

their armed forces as well as to upgrade their relations with Western governments and thus have access to arms and facilities'. As far as practical cooperation is concerned, he mentions, 'It was also progressing but at a slow pace, bearing in mind the complexities of the security environment in the region'.[42]

Hovorka in interview maintains that MD partners themselves were not homogenous, not only Arabs against Israelis, but also Arabs against Arabs; each country had its own vision, aims and perceptions towards the process. Though 'establishing such a process, despite all these regional complexities, is a success. At least, it has encouraged the exchange of various points of view. It has also laid the foundation for future security cooperation between NATO and the regions of the Mediterranean and the Middle East'.[43]

Likewise, another NATO official (F.K.) in interview asserts that 'the process has its own success and failure'. She explains that while it did not achieve any considerable results, it did, doubtless, encourage different parties to work and listen to each other and avoid 'misunderstanding and mistrust that could lead to catastrophic results'.[44]

Ammor in interview clarifies that 'Dialogue is a good initiative as such. But MD partners did not take the expected benefits from it because the dialogue remains a NATO offer, i.e. it was an unbalanced relationship between the giver (NATO as one entity) vis-à-vis the taker (individual MD partners); and the Southern partners could not reach an agreement between them in order to specify needs and concerns'.[45]

Dokos mentions that the Mediterranean Dialogue is a useful starting point because 'its central contribution in its current and somewhat minimalist format is probably that of providing a 'light' and yet formal – i.e. institutionalised – channel for an exchange of ideas and proposals'.[46]

Finally, it is worth underlining that an assessment made by the NATO Defence College admits that only limited success has been achieved within the context of the MD process due to the following factors:

1. MD partners are not a homogenous block economically, politically or militarily. The unresolved 'hard' (rather than 'soft') security challenges they face today are therefore kaleidoscopic and multi-dimensional by nature. (The past/current MD programmes – because it is by definition a limited cooperative mechanism – could not hope to encompass such diversity adequately.)
2. Participation in the Mediterranean Dialogue is geographically fragmented, since potential members must first secure alliance-wide consensus/approval. NATO has yet to invite several states – Libya, Lebanon, Syria – to join MD.
3. The Mediterranean Dialogue remains a NATO programme that promotes a NATO agenda, despite measured attempts by the Alliance to transfer ownership to its partners.
4. The implementation of this agenda also remains bilateral – i.e. comprehensive and holistic regional level security cooperation does not exist yet in the dialogue, or in the Maghreb/Mashrek in general.
5. The MD process is too often 'a dialogue without money'.

6 There are principled differences of opinion among allies over how to implement the current MD programme and how to deepen and widen it in the future.
7 Mediterranean partners remain ambivalent about what they ultimately want or expect from the programme. They seek NATO's support and yet also appear to be suspicious of its motives. Their commitments to MD have therefore waxed and waned.[47]

The assessment of the author is illustrated in Figure 3.1. In addition, the major obstacles the author believes have had a negative affect on the MD process are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Obviously, this empirical outcome proves the utility as well as applicability of liberal institutionalism in this context; as the majority of interviewees agreed that the process has achieved some success, whether significant or not, despite the surrounding obstacles. As clarified before, the theory holds the view that cooperation, no matter how limited it is, might soften the rigid environment, and this cooperation remains a possibility that should not be ruled out in all circumstances.

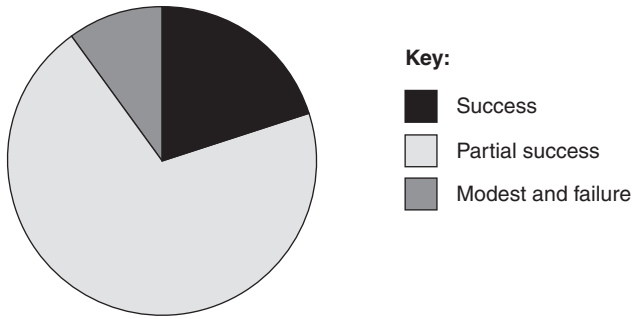

Figure 3.1 Assessment of the MD initiative

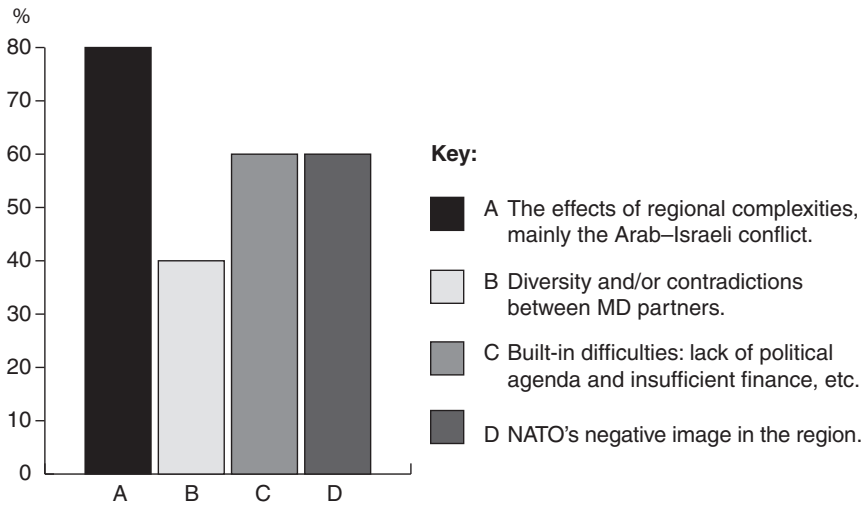

Figure 3.2 Factors that negatively affected the MD process

In other words, dialogue and cooperation, particularly if conducted through institutions, are very useful tools that could be employed to reduce the regional intensity. Importantly, there was a clear recognition of the importance of building confidence through changing the prevailing attitudes and the systematic exchange of information; as the theory argues.

Having reviewed these views, it could be said that despite its relative success, particularly in the field of practical cooperation, the MD process has been beset with internal and external difficulties. First, the aims or objectives of the whole process were too vague or not well defined. For example, 'dispelling misperception' or 'building confidence' are very elastic expressions and it is not easy to ascertain, at the end of the day, whether they have been achieved or not.

Second, huge disparities between the two partners of the process, because of differences in culture, background and perception, have limited MD's success. Winrow indicates that 'security appears to be perceived differently by governments and peoples North and South of the Mediterranean. The Arab public, in general, appears to regard with much suspicion the United States and Western Europe'.[48] In this regard, Kolodziej explains that agreeing on an acceptable definition for security is a difficult task, and 'unless we can find common ground, we will be talking about different things designated as "security". We will be unwittingly relying on conceptual filters that project widely contrasting and refracted images of what security is and how to address it'.[49]

Third, the severe contradictions that exist not only between the Arabs and Israelis, because of the complications of the long-standing Arab–Israeli conflict, but also between Arab partners themselves, leaves MD structurally crippled. Harmony is lacking across the Arab world on matters of security and national interests.

Winrow believes:

> In practice, though, for the foreseeable future, it seems that Arab states are more likely to deploy their missiles and aircrafts against other Arab states or Israel than against NATO. However, NATO forces may have to confront WMD in the field if they are ever to become involved in crisis management operations in the Southern or Eastern Mediterranean.[50]

Fourth, the long legacy of mistrust between MD partners, with the exception of Israel, and the West has been hard to overcome. Rightly or wrongly, NATO has been perceived to be either a tool of US policy and/or a post-Cold War institution that was seeking to maintain itself by enlarging its scope and activities as well as addressing real or imaginative adversaries. More precisely, it was thought that NATO did hold confrontational ideology towards the Arab and/or 'Islamic' Middle East.[51]

Views on this point differ. Lord Robertson in interview has another opinion on the relationship between NATO and the 'Islamic' Middle East. He confirms that negative perceptions in the Islamic world in general and the Middle East in particular about the North Atlantic Alliance have been changed or vanished in

recent years, because of the positive role the Alliance played in protecting and safeguarding Muslims in Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. 'Without any doubt, we have succeeded in breaking up the psychological and historic barriers. That is why I don't think the phenomenon of Islamophobia would have its negative impact on fruitful cooperation between the two parties.'[52]

However, Rizzo in interview observes that there is a still a problem of mistrust between the two parties. For the Middle East, there is the legacy of colonialism and the perception that NATO is a Cold War institution, and for NATO, 'a number of NATO allies were not enthusiastic about having a partnership with Arab countries'.[53]

Winrow mentions that 'It is worth noting here that Arab governments and even more so Arab peoples in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean tend to regard NATO and the United States as one and the same'.[54] He also highlights that the Arab countries were inwardly satisfied about the incremental nature of the MD process, because they would not dare to explain to their populations how they could participate in such military or security cooperation with Israel and NATO.[55]

Aliboni in interview mentions, 'The image of NATO with the Arab masses is very negative. The elite would have no or few problems in enhancing their relationship with NATO, but are prevented from doing so because of the negative perception in the masses'.[56]

Arguably, Arabs' lack of trust could be understood not only in light of the long legacy of hostility between the West and the Middle East region, but also because of certain events of a military nature that had preceded the launching of the MD process. In this respect, Benantar indicates that in the post-Gulf war (1991) era, the Western powers conducted military redeployment in the Mediterranean, including military exercises near Maghribi coasts. The following period, he adds, witnessed the creation in 1992 of the Stanavformed (Standing Naval Force Mediterranean) by NATO, and the creation in 1996 of Eurofor and Euromarfor by the Southern European countries, and all these activities raised concerns and fears on the Arab side.[57]

Noticeably, a certain degree of uncertainty and suspicion can still be recognised on both sides, which to some extent undermines the view that the dialogue had successfully dispelled principal misperceptions. Realistically speaking, it should not have been expected that this process alone, no matter how successful it might be, would lower the level of antagonism and suspicion that has long existed in the region, bearing in mind the impact of some US policies in Palestine and Iraq.

Fifth, there were some divergent views within NATO itself towards MD since its inception. Factually, a certain lack of enthusiasm by some allies towards the process itself was also noticeable. This was reflected in some allies allocating insufficient funds supporting MD activities. Others even changed positions during the development of the process. Consequently, a certain degree of improper management of the whole process could be observed. Winrow clarifies that some NATO allies, like Canada, the Scandinavian countries and Germany were less enthusiastic about the Mediterranean initiative; meanwhile the United Kingdom expressed some concern about the financial costs of the whole process.[58]

A.C. in interview discloses that Spain and some South European countries had preferred to have distinctive security cooperative ties with South Mediterranean countries within the European framework, but they could not achieve this objective at that time. That is why they engaged with what has been developed through NATO's mechanism.[59]

A.C. also underlines the difficulties that surrounded the process within NATO itself because of the divergence of views between allies on many policies, saying, 'Practically speaking, NATO is an extremely complicated organisation. Sometimes, it becomes too difficult to manage the differences between the allies themselves … For example, anything proposed by Greece is automatically refused by Turkey … and vice versa'. He also complained that some allies like Canada and Poland are indifferent about the whole process and have nothing to add.[60]

Meanwhile, some allies, like the United Kingdom and Italy, have shown more support for the whole process. Rooke in interview states that the UK holds the view that the whole process is positive and useful and encourages every partner to respond positively to new proposals that are seeking to upgrade the relationship.[61]

Cattaneo in interview mentions that 'Italy is in favour of enriching the political dialogue between NATO and MD partners. We are in favour of enhancing different forms of cooperation, but we don't see that NATO can play a role with regards to the major issues in the region, like the Palestinian crisis'.[62]

Georgopoulou in interview asserts that Greece supported, and shall continue to support, these policies and any other policy taken in the future with regards to the NATO–Middle East relationship because it is keen on stability and peace in the neighbouring region.[63]

Irrespective of these factors, it could be argued that MD, in its first stage, was a 'social learning process' offered by the North Atlantic Alliance to South Mediterranean countries in order to pave the way towards more substantial security cooperation in the future. Adler and Barnett indicate that social learning is an essential basis for the establishment of a security community. They explain the dynamics of interactions, saying:

> First, during their transactions and social exchanges, people communicate to each other their self-understanding, perceptions of reality, and their expectations. As a result, there can occur changes in individual and collective understandings and values. Second, learning often occurs within institutionalised settings. Institutions promote the diffusion of meanings from country to country, may play an active role in the cultural and political selection of similar normative and epistemic understandings in different countries, and may help to transmit shared understanding from generation to generation. Third, social leaning may not be sufficient for the development of a security community unless this learning is connected to functional processes that are traceable to a general improvement in the state's overall conditions.[64]

Evidently, some of the above-mentioned aspects occurred in the first phase of MD.

Conclusion

In sum, NATO's role in its pre-9/11 phase can be seen within the premises of liberal institutionalism. Indeed, no other theory can better explain the evolution of the MD process.

First, the process was built on a conviction that human nature prefers cooperation to conflict. Second, the whole process in its two main tracks, i.e. political dialogue and practical cooperation, is aimed at changing prevailing negative perceptions of NATO, and subsequently the West, in an attempt to explore the possibilities of cooperation. Third, the impact of individual perceptions and the power of ideas on the process were noticeable as it progressed. Fourth, the process was initiated and evolved in a positive setting not imposed or dictated by hegemonic power. Fifth, the core of the process was to provide MD partners with the necessary information about NATO, as well as allowing them to convey to NATO and others their points of view and concerns.

The aim lying behind these intertwined efforts was to create common understandings and shared interests that might serve as catalysts to improve regional security. All these factors and efforts fit well within the theory of liberal institutionalism.

Broadly speaking, the overriding principle that underpins all of the Alliance's new forms of relationship in its transformation process, as illustrated, is building stability through establishing cooperative channels with some key or 'moderate' countries in strategically important regions – i.e. 'containment through cooperation'. Consistent with this, the NATO–South Mediterranean Dialogue has clearly demonstrated that the Alliance can offer valuable assistance and expertise in areas of common interest, including, first and foremost, the various activities of practical cooperation mentioned above. Additionally, the dialogue has successfully increased understanding, at least to some extent, and laid down the foundation for a goal-attaining approach in the future.

Irrespective of all its difficulties, this dialogue could be considered a useful tool of preventive diplomacy and an important vehicle for confidence-building measures between the two parties. It was a useful venue to pursue desired rapprochement between NATO and some Middle Eastern countries.

To conclude, MD itself, from 1995 to 2001, has been successful in paving the way towards the second phase of the relationship between the two parties that has started in the aftermath of 9/11. This is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

4 NATO's role in the Middle East post-9/11

In this chapter, focus is given to the expanded role of NATO in the Middle East post-9/11. This covers 'the Enhanced Dialogue' with key Mediterranean countries and the ICI mechanism with Arab Gulf countries. The following section shows that NATO's post-9/11 Middle East role does not deviate or challenge the theoretical framework adopted (liberal institutionalism), from which concepts in the pre-9/11 stage were drawn. Instead, it gives more emphasis and credibility to this framework, as the process has dedicated much more time, money and effort to enriching common understandings between NATO and its Middle Eastern partners by sharpening and upgrading political consultations, as well as holding training courses for the officials of concerned states. Additionally, NATO, so far, has not shown any intent to impose on its partners any requests with regards to post-9/11 security requirements.

To start with, NATO's interest in and worries over the region of the 'Broader Middle East' have increased with the emergence of the new global paradigm in the 9/11 aftermath. Former Secretary General Lord Robertson stated in 2002 that not only NATO but also the entire world have given their attention to the 'Greater Middle East' after these deadly attacks which reminded everyone of the continuing volatility of the region, and how badly Europe and America could be affected by this volatility.[1]

Noticeably, NATO's reaction towards the events of 9/11 was rapid. The Alliance responded swiftly, in a manner that embodied the solidarity of the allies and, at the same time, its vitality and necessity in this new and undefined era. This was crystallised in the declaration, made on the day following the attacks, the first in the Alliance's history, about the readiness of NATO to invoke Article 5, which states that:

> The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.[2]

This appeared to be a somehow symbolic move in an atmosphere of high tension, but it also presented irrefutable evidence of mutual and unconditional commitment between NATO allies.

To expand on this, the emergence of a new global era of countering international terrorism, following the 11 September attacks, has fundamentally changed the primary threats to international security assessment and redefined the concept of security for all states, although in different ways. Consequently, successive post-9/11 NATO summits have underlined the imperative of enhancing the role of the Alliance in the Middle East region. Translating this will into action, the Alliance embarked on a series of actions with regards to its Middle Eastern policy. Given the fact that more than 20 countries border the Mediterranean Sea, and perhaps around eight more have close connections with it, and have contributed in one way or another to its complexity, diversity, sensitivities and circumstances, the need was therefore vital to develop a new formula for wider and in-depth cooperation, especially to cope with the requirements of Western policies in the post-9/11 era.

It is now opportune to review, in detail, major developments in post-9/11 NATO policies towards the Middle East region.

The evolution of NATO's Middle Eastern policy post-9/11

The basic features of NATO's policy towards the region in the post-9/11 years were drawn in the successive summits – i.e. the 2002 Prague Summit, the 2004 Istanbul Summit and the 2006 Riga Summit. Overall, the message of the three consecutive summits is consistent with liberal institutionalism. Broadly speaking, the three summits, particularly the 2004 Istanbul Summit which marked a turning point in the development of NATO's role in the region, have granted more momentum to the process of changing perceptions, by presenting new tools for cooperation and launching public diplomacy campaigns, all aimed to pave the way towards fruitful cooperation in more serious fields, like combating terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Despite the prevailing tense atmosphere post-9/11, the three summits did not carry any negative intent towards NATO's MD partners. In short, the summits deepened and widened the scope of cooperation between NATO and the Middle East in an unprecedented manner, while maintaining the essence of the pre-9/11 process consistent with the chosen theoretical framework adopted in this research and explained in the previous chapter.

The Prague Summit

To underpin the enhancement of the Middle Eastern dimension of NATO's strategy, the North Atlantic Council identified, in 2002, strengthening and deepening relations with Mediterranean Dialogue partners as one of the highest priorities of the Alliance. It then approved certain measures to enhance consultations between the two parties with regards to terrorism.

At the Prague Summit, the allies declared in Paragraph 10 that:

> We encourage intensified practical cooperation and effective interaction on security matters of common concern, including terrorism-related issues, as appropriate, where NATO can provide added value … We reiterate that the Mediterranean Dialogue and other international efforts, including the EU Barcelona process, are complementary and mutually reinforcing.[3]

Doubtless, the vital need to trace and uproot terrorism was the reason for 'upgrading and intensifying practical cooperation'. The reference made to the interrelations and connections between NATO's Dialogue and the Barcelona Process carried a hidden message that the cooperative dialogue was a pre-condition for gaining the benefits of other regional initiatives. Phrased another way, it was made clear enough to parties concerned that no economic benefits could be gained from other Western initiatives if they did not show enough preparedness to support NATO in its endeavour in the region.

The allies, in this summit, were concerned to show their determination to pursue this matter, i.e. enhancing NATO's role in the region, particularly in the field of combating terrorism, seriously. This was also achieved more clearly and rapidly in the following summit.

The Istanbul Summit

The milestone of the evolution of the NATO–Middle East relationship was the 2004 Istanbul Summit, in which the allies showed resolute determination to address, in an unified manner, the dangers stemming from the South. In this summit, the allies invited, in Paragraph 36, the Mediterranean partners 'to establish a more ambitious and expanded partnership guided by the principle of joint ownership and taking into consideration their particular interests and needs'.[4] The overall aim of this new 'upgraded' relationship, as stated in the document, was 'To contribute towards regional security and stability through stronger practical cooperation, including by enhancing the existing political dialogue, achieving interoperability, developing defence reform and contributing to fight against terrorism'.[5]

Furthermore, the allies offered, in Paragraph 38, the opportunity of cooperation to other countries in the Broader Middle East region by launching the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Thus, the summit decided to move in two parallel and intertwined directions: first, to upgrade the Mediterranean Dialogue to a genuine partnership; and second, to launch the ICI with the aim of reaching out to, and fostering cooperation with, select countries in the region of 'the Broader Middle East'.[6]

Subsequently, what was noted as a historic meeting between the foreign ministers of the two parties – i.e. NATO allies and MD partners – was held in December 2004 at NATO's headquarters. The aim of the meeting was to conduct deliberations and consultations on the proposals of the Istanbul Summit with regards to

defining or upgrading the scope of the then current relationship. At the end of their meeting, the ministers decided to upgrade the existing dialogue to the level of a real and practical partnership. Bin in interview says:

> Undeniably, there are some differences about certain issues, like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; this is why we attach high importance to the ministerial meetings to exchange views and reach a formula that would enable the two parties to achieve the common aims.[7]

The new relationship named the 'Expanded and Broader Mediterranean Dialogue' has been set up to focus upon promoting the political dimension of the dialogue as well as enhancing practical cooperation in certain areas of concern, such as combating terrorism through intelligence sharing and participating in Operation Active Endeavour; supporting and cooperating with NATO's efforts to face the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and the availability of their means of delivery; achieving interoperability with the Alliance's forces; and finally cooperating in the fields or areas in which the Alliance can provide or add value, like assisting in defence reform and border security, etc.[8]

These objectives could be achieved through enhancing cooperation in certain priority areas, such as: putting into action a joint effort aimed at better explaining NATO's transformation and cooperative efforts; promoting military-to-military cooperation through active participation in selected military exercises to achieve more interoperability and preparedness to contribute to NATO-led operations that could include non-Article 5 crisis response operations, such as disaster relief, humanitarian relief, search and rescue, peace support operations, etc.; promoting democratic control of armed forces and facilitating transparency in national defence planning and defence budgeting in support of defence reform; combating terrorism including effective intelligence sharing and maritime cooperation including in the framework of Operation Active Endeavour; contributing to the work of the Alliance on threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery; promoting cooperation as appropriate and where NATO can add value in the field of border security, particularly in connection with terrorism, small arms, etc.; and enhancing cooperation in the area of civil emergency, etc.[9]

With respect to the newly developed ICI, this seeks to promote practical 'bilateral' cooperation with the interested countries in the region as a whole – i.e. the broader region of the Middle East, especially the Gulf countries – as a first priority. Doubtless, these countries have always been of the utmost importance for both the United States and Europe. Former Secretary General Scheffer justifies the growing importance of the Gulf from the Alliance's perspective by indicating that the nature of global threats mean that they exclude nobody. He observes that 'the region faces formidable security challenges. Several countries in the region have been targets of terrorist attacks, and the immediate neighbourhood remains a flashpoint of unresolved regional issues, of proliferation risks, and of political and religious extremism'.[10] In this context, Scheffer is hinting at the Iranian nuclear crisis and its possible repercussions on Gulf security.

Additionally, trade between Gulf countries and EU countries reached $81 billion and trade with the United States was $34 billion in 2002,[11] not to mention the importance of oil reserves referred to earlier.

NATO documents indicate that:

> The initiative aims at enhancing security and stability through a new transatlantic engagement, offering tailored advice on defence reform, defence budgeting, defence planning and civil military relations, promoting military to military cooperation to contribute to interoperability, fighting terrorism through information sharing and maritime cooperation, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means and fighting illegal trafficking.[12]

In scrutinising the framework of this initiative, it could be noted that, contrary to the 'Enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue', which has contained, even since its inception in 1995, bilateral and multilateral components, ICI is exclusively confined to bilateral cooperation with interested countries in the region, including the Palestinian Authority, subject to the North Atlantic Council's approval, as stated by the Alliance. The 'interested countries' in the region mean those countries that share the aims and essence of this initiative, with particular emphasis on the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the raison d'être of the Alliance in its new doctrine. The Alliance indicated that ICI candidates would be considered by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis, each on its own merit.

Following the breakthrough that was achieved at the Istanbul Summit, NATO's secretary general conducted a series of visits to countries concerned (MD/ICI) in 2004 and 2005 to speed up the pace of the evolving relationships.[13] The message of these visits was clear that the Alliance was determined to pursue its plans in the region.

The Alliance has also launched a public diplomacy campaign to rectify or improve its image in the eyes of the intelligentsia in Middle Eastern countries, in order to pave the way towards achieving tangible results in the coming years. For example, the various dimensions of NATO's role have been introduced to elites, officials and academics, in the countries concerned, by means of various workshops, seminars and dialogues between the Alliance and civil society organisations covering issues such as good governance, civilian control of military establishments and the necessity of defence reform as well as the concepts of transparency and openness. Discussion on these topics took the form of brainstorming to examine the intentions and reactions of existing regimes in the region. Bin in interview notes, 'During the previous stages of the dialogue, we only sought to change the image of the Alliance in the ruling elites. Currently, we are targeting the general public opinion – i.e. academics, journalists – and we must admit we have a lot of work to do to achieve this aim'.[14]

In face of the new proposed set of cooperative activities, which include important issues like 'defence reform' (more specifically introducing concepts of

democratic or civilian control over military forces), transparency in budgeting and military preparedness, governmental reactions varied from country to country, as a normal reflection of the diversity of circumstances and differences in aspirations, perceptions and national goals. Whereas some countries have shown more readiness to embrace these new mechanisms, such as Kuwait and Qatar, others, like Egypt, have preferred to follow the traditional policy of 'wait and see', avoiding expressing their immediate concerns, or even becoming the first to take an unwelcoming stance.

Notwithstanding, the secretary general has frequently emphasised that following the launch of the Enhanced Dialogue and ICI, the Alliance received a lot of positive responses, especially from Gulf States. Rizzo in interview confirms that 'There has been considerable progress after the Istanbul Summit; we have received positive responses to the summit's proposals (MD and ICI). After about seven years of no significant progress, it was highly important to take one step forward and upgrade the existing mechanism'.[15]

Bin in interview comments in this regard, saying that:

> As for the Istanbul proposals, ICI and the Enhanced Dialogue, I want to confirm two things. First, it is not true that these proposals were launched without prior consultations, as we had consulted the interested countries, especially the Gulf States, and the overriding trend was that we should deal with issues of the Gulf region separately from issues of the Middle East and North Africa. In fact, ICI is only presented to the Gulf States, and I can confirm that four of them have joined the process. Still, Saudi Arabia and Oman have not decided yet. Of course, there are different levels of interest and responses towards these proposals, but I can confirm that all of them could be categorised as 'positive mode' reactions. Adding to this, there is another forum for cooperation, which is NATO+. For example, there is the NATO+Kuwait formula. The second point is that nothing was imposed on anybody as we did not ask anyone to sign anything. These mechanisms were just proposals for future cooperation.[16]

This swift response crystallises and confirms the Gulf States' willingness, with the exception of Oman and Saudi Arabia for the time being, to support, safeguard and back up any potential role of the Alliance in the region. Understandably, these countries have always been keen to make their ties with the West in general, and the United States in particular, as strong as possible because they have always thought that such a relationship is the surest or only viable way to protect themselves from regional hostilities, taking into account their lack of human resources and military capabilities in comparison with other regional powers, such as Iraq and Iran.

The echo of this strong and inherent desire for cooperation as well as the impacts of US influence could be noticed in the views of officials of the four Gulf countries that have joined the ICI. Again, all the following views conform to the theoretical context identified earlier, particularly its postulates regarding

the benefits of cooperation, based on mutual interest, on improving the security environment and the positive role of institutions in facilitating such cooperation.

Ali (Emirates) in interview mentions that his country is seeking to obtain more experience and training for its personnel from the ongoing dialogue with the North Atlantic Alliance. He says, 'It is the main aim of our membership of the ICI initiative. We recognise the high importance of NATO's role in the region post-9/11; that is why we are trying to maximise our benefits from this relationship. The American role in the Gulf is indispensable, and we are aware of this and pay due attention to its demands'.[17]

Khlaifa (Bahrain) clarifies that his country welcomed the increasing role of the North Atlantic Alliance and, 'At the current stage, we are gaining experience in issues of mutual concern, like civil emergencies and rescue operations, etc. Of course, we do value the role of the United States in securing the Gulf area. All these efforts are complementing each other'.[18]

Abdullah (Qatar) indicates that his country is open to different forms of cooperation, 'because NATO is one of the most important organisations that has a very important role in the international arena and it is the alliance that combines the big Western countries, first and foremost the United States. Therefore, we are cooperating for our mutual benefit'. He concludes by saying, 'We understand the concerns about energy security. It is also our vital interest to cooperate with NATO for the sake of securing our interests'.[19]

El-Hassan (Kuwait) says, 'Certainly, we have an inseparable strategic alliance with the United States. Due to the fragility of the security environment in the Gulf, we have always given the maximum importance to the United States as the sole power. In this context, we are welcoming the new NATO's role'.[20]

Significantly, it was made as clear as possible that priority would always be given to the US role in the region. El-Attiya, secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), states that it would be useful to relate international partners, including first and foremost NATO, with the security environment in the Gulf for the mutual benefit of the two parties, but this would only occur after full recognition and acknowledgment that the role of the United States would remain fundamental and indispensable as the main guarantor of Gulf security. He says that 'any security arrangements with the Gulf should be complementary to the American role, and any future cooperation with the Alliance will be affected or determined by the role that Europe envisages for itself on the international landscape, and whether this role would be acceptable to the United States'.[21]

Currently, the Alliance is developing programmes of activities for cooperation with Arab Gulf countries. On the other hand, it was announced in October 2006 that NATO and Israel have finalised an 'Individual Cooperation Programme' under the Enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue and the modalities of Israel's contribution to NATO's Operation Active Endeavour. Rizzo commends the enthusiastic Israeli participation, saying that Israel would be the first MD country to join NATO's Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean, and 'with very strong Israeli engagement, we are definitively moving from Dialogue to true

partnership'. Earlier, Israel participated in NATO military exercises in Romania and Ukraine in 2006.[22]

In another statement, Rizzo declared that already, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia have expressed interest in an individualised process similar to the NATO–Israel individual cooperation programme.[23]

In parallel, two NATO/MD defence ministers' meetings in February 2006 and 2007 were held in Taormina and Seville respectively. The two meetings led to further enhancement of cooperative military activities. Consequently, practical cooperation has been increased. 'There has been a noticeable increase in MD countries' participation in NATO activities, particularly in 2005 (an overall increase of 85 per cent as compared to 2004). A period of consolidation in 2006 [was] characterised by an overall eight per cent increase in military activities. Since Istanbul, the annual Mediterranean Dialogue Work Programme (MDWP) has been gradually expanded from more than 100 activities in 2004 to 200 in 2005; 400 in 2006 and more than 600 activities and events for the 2007.'[24]

Continuously, the political dimension has also been given new momentum as well. On 6–7 April 2006, a high-level meeting, based on the 26 + 7 formula, was convened between the two parties – NATO and Mediterranean partners – in Rabat, Morocco, within the framework of the ongoing process. At this meeting, Rizzo pledged to increase practical cooperation and deepen political dialogue.[25] As evidence of the seriousness of the current dialogue process, the Alliance invited all MD countries to sign an agreement for the protection of classified information with NATO (some of these countries have already done so). This precautionary step could be understood in light of the possible expansion of the dialogue in the future, with the inclusion of some sensitive issues such as combating terrorism and defence measures taken to face attacks using weapons of mass destruction.

The second meeting between NATO member's foreign ministers and their MD partners was held on 7 December 2007 in Brussels. At this meeting, the two parties declared their commitment to boosting the whole process with more determination to achieve its desired objectives.[26] The meeting itself was an opportunity to increase the political dimension of the whole process as it covered various Middle Eastern issues, like the peace process, Iraq, as well as the scope of cooperation between the two MD parties.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Alliance assures that the two parallel initiatives – MD and ICI – are complementary, progressive and individualised; that MD remains open to Mediterranean countries or those countries that are directly involved in Mediterranean-related affairs, and that dialogue and non-dialogue countries can still join the ICI if they want to intensify and increase their bilateral cooperation with the Alliance. Lord Robertson in interview advises that 'For the sake of their mutual interests, both parties, NATO and the Middle Eastern countries, should keep up and develop their cooperative mechanisms; certainly, the ICI and Enhanced Dialogue would pour in more energy in this respect'.[27]

The Riga Summit

At the Riga Summit, 28–29 November 2006, the allies expressed their determination to develop further the scope of their existing relationships. In Paragraph 13 of the summit declaration, they showed more readiness to consult with concerned parties, and even to consider the possibility of using certain tools from existing partnerships. They called for:

1 Enabling the alliance to call ad-hoc meetings as events arise with those countries that contribute to or support our operations and missions politically, militarily, and in other ways and those who are potential contributors, considering their interest in specific regions where NATO is engaged. This will be done using flexible formats for consultation meetings of Allies with one or more interested partners (members the EAPC, MD or the ICI) and/or interested Contact Countries, based on the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and self-differentiation.
2 Strengthening NATO's ability to work effectively with individual countries by opening up for consideration those partnership tools currently available to EAPC countries to our partners in the MD and the ICI, as well as interested Contact Countries, on a case-by-case basis.[28]

Moreover, in Paragraphs 15 and 16, they also declared that:

> We welcome the progress achieved in implementing the more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) agreed at our Istanbul Summit, and we remain committed to it, including through the decisions we have taken today … We also look forward to using the new pragmatic approach we have adopted today to enhance our relationship with MD and ICI countries as well as interested Contact Countries.[29]

To reach this end, some new initiatives were launched during this summit. For example, new tools were presented to MD countries to achieve more constructive relationships, such as the Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP), the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC), the Partnership Cooperation Cell (PCC), the e-Prime database and the Trust Fund mechanism.[30] Also, interoperability, i.e. enhancement of the ability of the two parties' forces to participate in joint missions, has also been an area of high importance. For instance, in 2006, 781 officers took part in courses, seminars and exercises in various educational venues of the North Atlantic Alliance.[31]

Although these initiatives are, certainly, limited in scope and extent in comparison with the remarkable results of the 2004 Istanbul Summit, they do reflect a certain degree of seriousness in pursuing the process. In general, these initiatives focus mainly on enhancing practical cooperation and transferring relevant expertise. Paragraph 17 states that:

> We have today launched the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative in the modernisation of defence structures and the training of security forces. The Alliance stands ready, in the spirit of joint ownership, and taking into account available resources, to share its training expertise with our MD and ICI partners from the broader region of the Middle East. Through an evolutionary and phased approach building on existing structures and programmes, we will set up to the benefit of our partners and NATO nations an expanding network of NATO training activities; etc.[32]

In commenting on the results of this summit, NATO's secretary general, on 12 December 2006, in Kuwait, explained that the new phase of cooperation has new elements: more substantial opportunities for political dialogue and consultation between the NATO allies and one or more MD or ICI partners; MD and ICI partners will be able to benefit from the menu of the partnership tools activities that were previously restricted to PFP countries; launching the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative; and 'By sharing experience with our partners from the Mediterranean and the Gulf region, we will make another step towards the "human interoperability" that is so crucially important for the success of future joint missions, as well as for our day-to-day cooperation'.[33]

Again, the secretary general confirms, 'We believe that joint ownership among equal partners remains a key principle of our cooperation. We also believe that cooperation is a two-way street; that we should not duplicate the efforts of others; and that nothing should be imposed on anyone'.[34] It would appear that the secretary general was clarifying that NATO intends to confine its role in these cooperative mechanisms and does not seek to replace or challenge any long-standing security relationship; that cooperation remains a voluntary option for countries concerned.

Before presenting an analysis of the feasibility of a growing role for NATO in the Middle East, it is important to identify how the parties concerned have perceived the reasons for – as well as orientations of – the new NATO endeavour in the region.

Survey of NATO's 'developed' Middle Eastern policy

The following empirical work clarifies that the structure of the process, in its pre-9/11 phase, was not only maintained but reinforced and enhanced significantly. The increasing number of practical cooperative activities and the intensified political dialogue, conducted in a series of meetings on various levels, besides numerous workshops and seminars, are accelerating the pace of the ongoing cooperation begun in 1994. Again, liberal intuitionalism is the most appropriate theoretical framework to illuminate and explain the various dimensions of this process. Indeed, the process, in its post-9/11 phase, still focuses upon building confidence by changing individual perceptions and using the power of ideas to improve a negative environment. NATO, as a well-established institution, has increased its ability to offer services that satisfy everyone's needs.

NATO, as an institution, can create, sustain and then enhance security cooperation with partners, some of which are still holding to negative attitudes about the West and/or the United States. Not only this, but the process has increased the exchange of information and, at a higher level, achieved more progress on the parallel MD and ICI mechanisms. In addition, the two parties, NATO and Middle East partners, have successfully maintained their positive cooperative relationship regardless of major crises that took place in the region, such as the 2003 Iraq war and continued complications of the Arab–Israeli conflict. In essence, this confirms that the two parties are confident of the validity of one of the basic assumptions of liberal institutionalism: that international anarchy does not preclude cooperation. On the contrary, cooperation could mitigate its ramifications. This has been proven in the case of combating the scourge of terrorism, as is clarified below.

To begin, the majority of officials and experts interviewed within the context of this research agreed that 9/11 has spurred key actors towards enhancing the role of NATO in the Middle East region, particularly in the field of practical cooperation. Also, some argue that this has happened as a result of US influence on both parties – NATO and the Middle East. What follows is divided into two sections: first, a summary of the views of some NATO officials; and second, a summary of the views of Middle Eastern partners with respect to various aspects of the ongoing relationship.

NATO's officials, allies' officials and experts

Lord Robertson in interview notes that in the aftermath of 9/11, NATO found that it was necessary to develop the MD process in the field of combating terrorism, instituting a new set of practical cooperative activities including various military exercises. Spain and Italy, he clarifies, were pushing hard in this direction, in being nearer to the sources of danger – in the Middle East – than other allies.[35]

Bin clarifies that the MD process has gained momentum because of recent developments, becoming more active and vital for the two parties. He also notes that the MD partners have shown more interest in engaging the various aspects of the process.[36]

Hovorka remarks that the improvement of NATO's role has occurred because of the results of the 2002 Prague and the 2004 Istanbul summits. He adds that it is sufficient to indicate that three MD partners, Morocco, Algeria and Israel, have sought to participate in 'Active Endeavour', the main NATO mission for monitoring and inspecting ships in the Mediterranean in the framework of the Alliance's policy of combating terrorism after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.[37]

Daguzan argues that growing worries about terrorism and weapons of mass destruction have been reflected positively in deepening and widening the MD process, so 'the process has continued in the post-9/11 years with more strength'.[38]

Officials of the Middle Eastern (MD and ICI) partners

Likewise, the majority of Middle Eastern partner officials share the view that the overall role of NATO has been enhanced in an unprecedented manner; and they believe that NATO is seeking to achieve certain objectives, but first and foremost combating terrorism and helping in fostering a certain level of stability that serves better Western interests.

Rodkin (Israel) in interview mentions that there is an increase of NATO's activities post-9/11. It is sufficient to point to the Active Endeavour operation in the Mediterranean Sea that is an integral part of NATO's policy in combating terrorism. Moreover, admitting Gulf States in security dialogue is a very important aspect of NATO's evolving role in the Middle East. He also confirms that this sort of partnership with 'moderate states' is of great importance for regional stability and combating terrorism.[39]

Elbasr (Kuwait) in interview confirms that the scourge of terrorism has led the allies to develop the role of NATO in the whole region of the Middle East. 'Certainly, the allies have shown more readiness to rely more on NATO in implementing their policies in the post-9/11 years'.[40]

El Saher (Kuwait) in interview underlines, however, that the new aspects of NATO's role in the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf region, have not developed directly because of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, saying that 'this trend, in fact, had begun before. Nonetheless, the orientation has got a momentum or urgency because of these events … especially the need to address certain problems like terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction'.[41]

Ould Cheikh (Mauritania) in interview states that it is noticeable that the highly tense atmosphere that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11 has been reflected positively in NATO's role in the Middle East region. For many, dialogue has turned into a form of partnership.[42]

Gobreal (Tunisia) in interview mentions that according to his study of NATO's role in the region from 1997 to 2005, there is no comparison between the role of NATO before and after 9/11, and this could be verified by comparing the quality and number of activities that are being implemented within the framework of annual working programmes between NATO and Middle Eastern partners.[43]

Also, Aldwairi (Jordan) in interview mentions that from Jordon's perspective, the second period, i.e. post-9/11, is characterised by the determination of NATO heads of state and government to upgrade MD into a genuine partnership. He underlines that 'it was only after the Prague Summit that MD countries started to receive the full list of activities in a form of a MD military programme'. He also adds that 'NATO offers more than MD countries can swallow, so I can say the supply is more than the demand. I can confirm that the practical dimension of the MD process has surpassed the political dimension. Political consultations have fallen short and are still lagging behind'.[44]

Jihad Eldin (Algeria) in interview says that although Algeria joined the MD process in 2002, it could be confirmed that NATO's role in the post-9/11 years is more significant and substantial than its modest role before 9/11.[45]

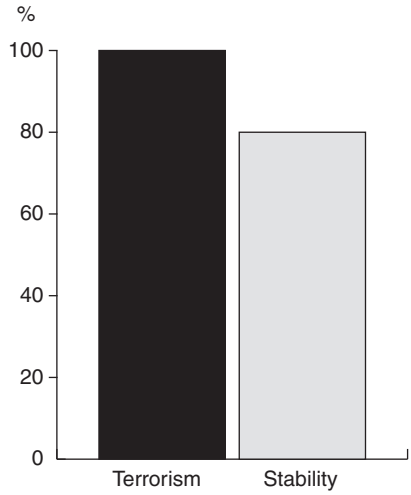

Figure 4.1 Reasons for the new NATO endeavour to enlarge its role in the Middle East

Contrary to the above, Rademacher in interview offers a different point of view. He says, 'I would not agree with those who claim that the NATO's role was less successful between 1994 and 2001. In my view, there have been many positive developments in the relationship between NATO and MD countries during those years'. He also argues that it was and remains an incremental process that progressed at a pace everybody felt comfortable with. 9/11 had an impact on the dialogue in that it gave more prominence to certain issues, most obvious those related to the fight against terrorism. He concludes that 'At the NATO Istanbul Summit in 2004, we have seen a further deepening or enhancement of the relationship, with a focus on promoting practical cooperation in this and other areas'.[46]

Also, Aliboni in interview mentions that the United States did not succeed to use NATO properly in combating terrorism, except in its military task in Afghanistan. As for the Middle East, NATO, which serves as a cooperative instrument with MD and ICI countries, could not offer any significant contribution so far.[47]

Figure 4.1 shows how the author assesses the reasons for the new NATO endeavour in the region.

These previously reviewed opinions are vivid evidence that adopting the chosen theoretical framework – liberal institutionalism – can offer insights applicable, in varying degrees, in other regions. As stated, a preliminary stage of dialogue was developed and then modified to deal with post-9/11 security requirements, such as combating terrorism and maintaining stability, despite huge differences between the parties concerned on several major issues. It is noticeable that the two parties have come to recognise the necessity of enhancing their cooperation for the sake of serving their mutual security interests. In part, this confirms their common understanding of post-9/11 realities that have changed the concept of security worldwide.

Meanwhile, this outcome also clarifies that they have maintained, in their interaction in the post-9/11 years, the core of liberal institutionalism, which is

'cooperation'. Seemingly, the friendly posture adopted by NATO has yielded some positive results that could not be obtained otherwise. Furthermore, nothing has indicated that this ongoing cooperation has, implicitly or explicitly, included any action of a coercive or forcible nature.

Evaluation of NATO's Middle Eastern policy post-9/11

The experience of the enlargement process Eastward has shown that a post-Cold War NATO is, and will be, an agent of political change worldwide. Also, when violence broke out in the Balkans, the North Atlantic Alliance proved that it could handle it comprehensively.

These vivid proofs of the usefulness of the Alliance in tackling large-scale challenges may lead to optimistic expectations about its future role in the Middle East region. But it would be wrong to generalise about, assess, or even suggest the complete success of the Alliance's role in the Middle East on the basis of past experience. The previous success of the alliance in this or that region does not itself guarantee its success in the Middle East region with all its complexities and complications, especially taking into account the antagonistic attitudes of the peoples of the region towards Western policies, particularly US policies, on various issues in the region.[48] In this context, Acharya underlines, 'Localisation dynamics should also serve as a note of caution to those expecting ideas and institutions building models successful in one part of the world to be replicated elsewhere'.[49]

Clearly, the most pressing security challenges and reasons for instability in the region are emanating from a volatile melting pot, which contains various interacting elements including the ramifications of US policy towards the region, weakness, poverty and fragmentation, worsening socio-economic indicators and erosion of the scope and extent of the powers of governmental authorities. Clearly, NATO has nothing to do in solving most of these complicated and accumulated conditions.

It appears that NATO's relevance to the Middle East region comes from a mixture of deterrence, if necessary, and its contribution towards enhancing stability and security in their varied meanings. In analysing the Alliance's post-9/11 documents,[50] conclusion could be reached that terrorism and weapons of mass destruction are two of the main reasons behind the steps being taken to build more advanced forms of relationship between the Alliance and the Middle Eastern countries.

As for the danger of terrorism, mention could be made that there is almost consensus among the allies about the need to address and eliminate the sources of international terrorism, although one cannot, currently, identify a fully-fledged security policy in relation to this matter through which the North Atlantic Alliance can achieve tangible results.

NATO has increased its consultations with MD and ICI partners with regards to the reasons for terrorism in the post-9/11 years. Some Arab MD countries were not in favour of accepting the request of NATO, at the outset, to enhance consultations about this matter, taking into consideration the difficulties of identifying terrorism and the best ways of eliminating its dangers.[51] Contrary to this, Israel has been at the forefront of pushing towards a more constructive role for the Alliance

in this respect, taking into consideration its need to enhance regional cooperation on combating 'terrorism', according to its definitions and perceptions.[52]

However, MD and ICI countries, afterwards, have come to recognise the high importance that NATO has attached to its role in this regard. Bearing in mind the factor of political expediency in the post-9/11 years, and the need to show more flexibility towards American requests in this respect, they agreed to increase the frequency and pace of consultations within the framework of existing mechanisms.

In order to increase the ability of NATO to cope with this huge challenge, NATO proposed concluding a convention of protection of secrecy of information with its partners. The objective is to facilitate the exchange of intelligence information with regards to the threats posed by terrorism as well as other sensitive cooperative activities. All MD countries, except Egypt, have accepted to sign and ratify the convention. The matter is still under consideration by the Egyptian authorities, bearing in mind the conditions and requirements of the proposed convention which require the acceptance of inspections of the way the national authorities are handling the secret information.[53]

Furthermore, some seminars and meetings for the chiefs of security agencies and institutions were organised. Also relevant are the major tangible efforts made by the Alliance via Operation Active Endeavour to monitor and inspect ships in the Mediterranean Sea. Currently, the operation is being conducted in cooperation with Israel; meanwhile Morocco and Algeria are about to join soon. Others, such as Tunisia and Jordan, do not have significant contributions to make in this respect, bearing in mind their lack of sufficient resources. As for Egypt, it only accepts to cooperate with the ongoing operation on a case-by-case basis.[54]

In Paragraph 20, the 2006 Riga Summit declaration welcomed the contribution of some partners in this operation. It stated that:

> We strongly condemn terrorism, whatever its motivations or manifestations, and will fight it together as long as necessary, in accordance with international law and UN principles. The Alliance continues to provide an essential transatlantic dimension to the response against terrorism. Operation Active Endeavour, our maritime operation in the Mediterranean, continues to make an important contribution to the fight against terrorism and we welcome the support of partner countries that has further enhanced its effectiveness.[55]

Lord Robertson clarifies that Operation Active Endeavour has led to very positive results for all concerned, mentioning that 'With more than 30,000 vessels hailed, nine boarded, more than 240 escorted, it is a big success; it has also led to a decrease by 20 per cent in maritime insurance premiums in the region and an estimated reduction in illegal immigration of 50 per cent'.[56]

Other than this, it is doubtful whether NATO's efforts, in this respect, will yield any remarkable results in the near future for many reasons, including first and foremost that terrorism is not a specifically Mediterranean or Middle Eastern phenomenon, but a global one (terrorism generally exists in interlinked networks);

and second, it is difficult to imagine that the Alliance would be the sole or main organisation that is entitled, or supposed, to fight terrorism.

Since it is a global challenge, terrorism necessitates concerted global policies aimed at combating corruption and money laundering, and applying new methods. Realistically speaking, there seems little that can be done to prevent the recruitment of young people to extremist or resistance groups as long as they believe that they are victimised by the current American policies in Palestine and Iraq, etc.

This is not to ignore or minimise the importance of the 'auxiliary or supportive' role the Alliance can and is able to shoulder in this regard. More precisely, NATO can help in certain areas where others cannot, such as escorting ships in the Mediterranean, providing logistical and training exercises or enhancing information sharing.

Bin in interview states, 'I agree that NATO is not in a position to take the leading role in combating terrorism and WMD. However, we can support international efforts in this respect – i.e. intelligence sharing, providing exercises and combating smuggling, etc'.[57]

Generally speaking, it seems that NATO, in regards to terrorism, can only facilitate the efforts being exerted by others. It can supplement and back up other international efforts and initiatives that are seeking to secure stability and eliminate the factors that breed violence, hatred and crime, such as the Arab–Israeli conflict or Darfur. What should be remembered is that NATO can only do so after effective international intervention to solve these problems and securing a certain level of consent of the parties concerned.

Likewise, the issue of weapons of mass destruction has become more important in the recent years. NATO and Israel conducted the first ever round of consultation in 2005 to exchange views on the topic of proliferation of such weapons. Israel asked for a second round of consultations for the end of 2007.

According to K.E., other MD partners, including Egypt, refused NATO's request to start a dialogue in this respect as a matter of principle. This means that the majority of Middle Eastern partners do not see any role for the Alliance in this regard, at least for the time being.[58] So far, NATO did not take any serious action. It satisfies itself by confirming its unconditional support for efforts aimed at achieving arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Realistically speaking, it would seem impossible to convince the key Arab countries to lower the level of their military arsenals while it is widely believed that Israel possesses a huge nuclear arsenal. Lord Robertson in interview observes that:

> Certainly, the existence of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East poses an intolerable risk for the safety and security of the Euro-Atlantic area. However, bearing in mind that Israel never acknowledged that it possesses a nuclear weapon, and the fact that the nuclear weapon was never used in the history except only one time, attention should be focused upon eliminating chemical and biological weapons, which were used frequently against countries and peoples. Things will go drastically worse if terrorist groups succeed in obtaining such deadly weapons.[59]

From the perspective of key Arab countries, this view is unbalanced and cannot be accepted.[60] However, the Alliance is fully aware of this sensitive issue. Rizzo in interview states that:

> As for weapons of mass destruction, we are not seeking to tackle all the existing problems comprehensively, once and for all. We prefer to go slowly, to build trust and confidence, to show the fruitful results of cooperation. We are moving in non-disputable areas, as we are not willing to create problems. If we intended to do so, it would be certainly a recipe for disaster.[61]

Also, Bin in interview underlines that 'We are building on those grounds that are "suitable" for this purpose; it is a very long process that will take years. We have made it clear for everyone that we don't want to impose anything on any country. We only offer our expertise to whoever is interested in it'.[62]

There is a noticeable concurrence between experts and officials interviewed in the context of this research that NATO can only maintain a supportive role with regards to these two dangers – terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. This assessment is based on the nature of the organisation itself and the scope of its existing cooperative mechanisms, MD and ICI.

Brogomano in interview indicates that NATO, so far, is not able to enhance its role with regards to these two dangers, i.e. terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, because there is neither a framework for achieving goals nor a clear-cut perspective towards these two issues. Adding to this, MD partners did not agree to relate the whole process to the problem of terrorism.[63]

Dufourcq in interview states that political consultations have been long running on these two dangers; however, 'there is still no well defined agenda, no common vision, no framework, etc. The only positive thing that occurred, so far, is increasing understanding about the concerns and worries of each party'.[64]

Rooke in interview argues that NATO, as a military alliance, has not the resources and capabilities necessary and suitable to tackling these two dangers. The current task in Afghanistan, i.e. fighting the Taliban, he believes, is suitable for its structure and preparedness. He also confirms that the United Nations remains the right forum for handling those issues.[65]

Hardouin in interview refuses to assess progress negatively:

> Of course, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction are two major issues of great concern for the allies. Both issues have been issues of 'cooperation and consultation' between NATO and its Middle East partners (the MD and ICI countries). I'm not able tell to what extent progress has been reached in this or that issue. It is sufficient to indicate that both issues are under constant discussion and consultation, and this is a good achievement.[66]

The author's overall assessment is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Similar to the previous empirical results, this entire outcome is consistent with the chosen theoretical framework; as all interviewees agree that NATO, through

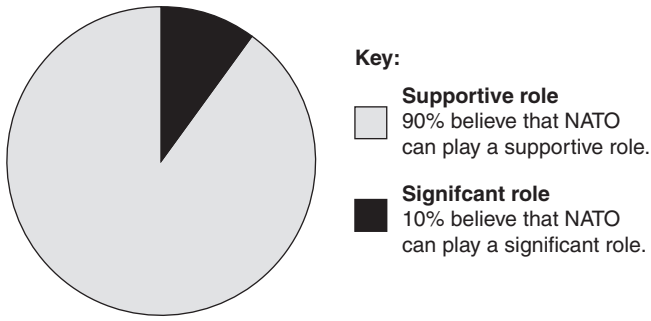

Figure 4.2 Assessment of the role played by NATO in the Middle East

MD and ICI mechanisms, could offer help in addressing these security challenges, although they disagree about how significant this assistance might be.

At this stage, the question which should be raised is whether or not the current international atmosphere – the Arab–Israeli conflict, Iraq, etc. – will prevent, or at least negatively affect, the successful implementation of NATO's plan in the volatile and sensitive Middle East region. It could be argued that what might undermine, or at least cast certain doubts on the probability of successful implementation of the Alliance's 'full' strategy in the region, is the widely-held perception, in some cases also the view in official circles, that NATO equals the United States. To make it clearer, perceived US alignment with Israel would not lead Arabs to trust NATO as an honest and neutral actor.

The counter-argument here is that NATO is an international organisation run by consensus; that the United States is only one member of the 26-country alliance. Therefore, the interested countries in the region can lobby on their own account in different capitals, such as London, Rome, Paris, etc. This argument does not appear to convince the majority that still believes that the US monopolises the leading position in the Alliance. They also believe that when the US fails to get its way, as happened over the Iraq war, it usually pursues its policies alone.

Commenting on this, Bin in interview observes that:

> The negative image of the alliance that prevailed in Arab countries could be ascribed to a number of factors, among which are colonial history, the Suez crisis, the heritage of the Cold War, etc. What cannot be ignored is the perception that prevails in the region that 'NATO equals the United States', taking into account American policies toward Israel, despite the fact that the NATO–Med Dialogue is less influenced by current events. I totally agree with the assumption that the role of the alliance is closely related to developments in current events and crises in the region, either positively or negatively. I mean that the environment could make the process more conducive or less conducive. The region is unpredictable; if anything major happens, this could change the course of the process. As for American policies, I believe that the Americans are trying to improve the situation and this must continue in the coming years.[67]

Likewise, Rizzo in interview admits that 'There is a high possibility that the current atmosphere in the Middle East will affect negatively the prospective role of the Alliance in the region; actually, American policies and prolonged conflicts don't help in supporting the role of the alliance in the region'.[68]

Likewise, Ghiles underlines that in the absence of any solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, there is little that can be resolved regionally. He also argues that the prevailing assumption that NATO and the United States is one entity is adding more complexity to NATO's role in the region, and this imposes that 'goals must perforce remain modest. In such a context, vast propaganda exercises would be counter-productive'.[69]

Alani recommends that NATO, in order to improve its bad image in the Arab world, presents itself as a security actor on its own, i.e. differentiated from its most important constituent allies.[70]

Paradoxically, it could be argued that while the American influence was the main reason of developing the role of the Alliance post-9/11, it is the nature of US policies towards the region that will remain the main – perhaps most formidable and insurmountable – obstacle to achieving the final aims that lie behind all these efforts (i.e. MD and ICI mechanisms) aimed at combating or eliminating weapons of mass destruction, as well as other conventional weapons that could reach the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area, and achieving stability through encircling, suppressing and eliminating the sources of religious terrorism in the region. This does not mean that stalemate or conflict is inevitable in the dialogue process. As shown previously, some Middle Eastern partners have shown, for various reasons, an increasing readiness and preparedness to get more involved in the current process. Aliboni in interview believes that regional complexities will not have a negative impact on the ICI and MD, saying, 'Some governments are still interested in pursuing their relationships with NATO, but this cannot be done too openly'.[71]

Realistically, in a world of interdependence and dangerous global threats, NATO and Middle Eastern countries cannot do anything but cooperate with each other as much, and for as long, as possible, at least to exclude any other forms of undesirable relationship. The North Atlantic Alliance is and will be offering 'voluntary' assistance that could be tailored to fit the specific needs of individual countries in the region; and the international balance of power dictates that key regional countries should respond positively to what is offered to them. It is understandable that whereas there is no obligation to accept the assistance of the Alliance, it is, in reality, too large and powerful to be ignored. Accepting its role is imperative, whereas selecting areas of cooperation is optional, at least up until now.

Keohane mentions that:

> Cooperation occurs when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination. To summarise more formally, intergovernmental cooperation takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners

> as facilitating realisation of their own objectives, as the result of a process of policy coordination.[72]

He adds, 'cooperation therefore doesn't imply an absence of conflict. On the contrary, it is typically mixed with conflict and reflects partially successful efforts to overcome conflict, real or potential'.[73]

The gradually evolving strategy, which is taking into account the complexity of the region, conflicts of interest and security calculations, reflects the high degree of understanding of the Alliance's policy drafters towards the circumstances of the region. In the same context, NATO's secretary general confirms that the Alliance is paying respect to national and regional specificities, as existing challenges may be perceived differently from country to country. That is why, he says, 'while the alliance will maintain a degree of coherence in its relations with its Mediterranean Dialogue partners, we are keen to work with our partners on an individual basis'.[74]

Also, what must be taken into account is that Middle Eastern countries should not be perceived as one category vis-à-vis the Alliance. As for Israel, its case is very different and should not be compared to others. It has always maintained a very special relationship with the United States. It also has contradictory visions and concerns to other neighbouring countries. Also, given their own special relationship with the United States, Gulf countries are more willing to cooperate.

On the other hand, it is noticeable that there are some differences between North African countries in their readiness and preparedness to develop this relationship. Whereas some, like Egypt, are only ready to proceed cautiously in building the required relationship, others, like Morocco, have shown more readiness to cooperate in certain fields. However, it could be argued that some Arab counties are still suspicious, or uncertain, as to whether or not the Alliance would resort to its main traditional function, which is deterrence, should there be conflicting interests at stake, especially with regards to the possession of some categories of weaponry.

At present, it is far from clear whether or not the Alliance, at a certain point in time, will have to address existing problems with greater seriousness, perhaps in an interventionist manner. This could occur in the case of unpredictable scenarios, such as the collapse or weakening of the Egyptian or Algerian regimes. Rizzo confirms that 'We have adopted a differentiated approach to Mediterranean security, an approach that is first and foremost political, yet does not neglect the potential for safeguarding our security against unwelcome developments'.[75]

This may suggest that, in the coming phase of the NATO–Middle East relationship, we might see the flip side of the coin – coercive measures, if events reach the point of severe conflicts of interest. This is not to hint that this will inevitably happen, but only to underline that the Alliance seems to have certain suspicions towards the region – as do some countries in the region against it. Nothing can rule out this unfavourable possibility.

It goes without saying that the ultimate outcome will depend on the respective wills of the two parties. The secretary general said that 'the alliance can only help the countries of the region to help themselves, and they must be prepared

to use NATO to the fullest possible extent'.[76] This implied that there is a clear opportunity for interested countries to take advantage of the huge resources of the Alliance; that whoever does not take advantage will be the loser. In fact, the two parties can cooperate, bilaterally or multilaterally, in a very positive manner, especially in fields such as military exercises, civil emergency preparedness, crisis management and scientist programmes, etc. Moreover, some countries could participate in some alliance missions for mutual benefit, like Operation Active Endeavour.

Other areas of cooperation, like defence reform and civilian control over military forces, that were proposed in order to back up other international initiatives seeking to foster the democratisation process in the region, are still to be considered by MD/ICI countries. So far, there is no sign of readiness on the part of these countries to cooperate in these fields. Seemingly, the current regional atmosphere as well as the interaction of internal politics between different entities within these states, i.e. the influence of military institutions, does not help in achieving these 'ambitious' aims.

Aliboni in interview expresses his conviction that 'the best Western contribution would be in the field of security governance as a means to attain more democratic and transparent governance. But this is the only field in which the Arab regimes are not interested at all. On the contrary, they reject any cooperation and consider it interference'.[77] Also, Tanner argues that 'NATO's chances to advance a liberal agenda in the context of defence cooperation will not be very good as long as the Israeli–Palestinian and Iraqi conflicts are not addressed in a coherent and credible way'.[78]

Consequently, it seems that NATO has adopted a realistic vision that is based on conviction that enhancing stability by any means, through the cooperative MD and ICI mechanisms, is a priority that should not be compromised for the sake of achieving other objectives.

Dufourcq in interview confirms that NATO is, currently, more concerned about the issue of stability rather than any other objective, like democratisation, bearing in mind the chronic crises mentioned earlier. He underlines that despite their differences, all allies agree, at the current stage, that NATO must seek to preserve a certain level of stability in the region. He also adds that 'NATO, which is mainly a military alliance, has little to present in the efforts exerted to support the democratisation of the region, and we know that any unfavourable engagement would be costly and dangerous. We are well aware that everything is connected in the region'.[79]

Before moving on, notice must be made that MD and ICI have not tackled so far the issue of energy security, which has always been of utmost importance for both parties.

The NATO–Egypt relationship: an MD case study

Traditionally, Egypt has maintained a unique status in the region of moral or undeclared leadership among other Arab countries. Once Egypt takes a few

steps forwards, others follow her direction. It is extremely important, therefore, to analyse the performance of Egypt in the two stages of NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue – before and after 9/11 – as this will indicate whether or not NATO's endeavour has or will meet its objectives in due course.

The relationship between Egypt and NATO first developed in the early stages of the NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue. Like other MD partners, Egypt participated in all related activities. This included frequent briefings given by NATO representatives with regards to the various aspects of NATO's transformation process. With the passing of the first months of the process, the exchange of information was also extended to include expressing views with regards to security issues in the Wider Middle East. However, no significant progress was achieved during this period.

Bin in interview assesses:

> We know that Egypt prefers to take small and gradual steps in developing its relationship with the alliance. It doesn't accept moving faster. We understand, of course, the complications of the Arab–Israeli conflict, and other complexities in Egypt. We understand the sensitivity of Egypt's position in the region. We respect its desire of developing such relationships in a proportional manner according to regional circumstances.[80]

In another interview, Bin mentions that 'Egypt was very cautious at the beginning of the process, but its participation has improved recently, meaning after the Istanbul Summit'.[81]

Lord Robertson in interview reveals that 'the whole process (MD) was crippled by the complications of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The Egyptian ambassador to Brussels, at this time, was in direct confrontation with the Israeli ambassador about related issues – i.e. terrorism, aspects of conflicts in the region, etc. That is why no tangible results were achieved in the first years of this process'.[82]

As far as the military cooperation is concerned, Hovorka in interview discloses that Egypt was the most reserved partner for extending maritime military cooperation. He ascribes this position to the sensitivity of the Suez Canal and various calculations regarding the Egyptian–Israeli relationship, taking into account that Israel was the first to participate in this form of cooperation.[83]

Winrow suggests that the reserved position of Egypt was because 'Egypt regards itself as one of the leading states in the Arab world. Perhaps partly because of a perceived need to demonstrate their credentials, Egyptian authorities have been especially critical of various aspects of the NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue'.[84]

The only positive sign in the NATO–Egypt relationship was the participation of Egyptian forces in NATO-led missions in Bosnia in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, after scrutinising the available information and documents,[85] it can be confirmed that Egypt's participation was not connected to the NATO–Egypt relationship; instead it was only related to the international role that Egypt has always envisaged for itself. 'K.E.' confirms this in interview:

> In general, Egypt's participation in peacekeeping missions is based on a certain criteria: its consistency with international legitimacy, i.e. relevant Security Council resolutions and the principles of international law. It has to fit with its vision for the nature of the task, for example humanitarian aspects, and calculations of its various relationships with other influential international partners.[86]

Notwithstanding, Santis mentions that Egypt's role in this crisis is evidence of the success of the MD process because it illustrates that 'we can work together voluntarily'.[87]

Irrespective of the contradictions – or at least inconsistency – of these assessments, this sort of rapprochement has not led, in reality, to building complete confidence or dispelling all existing misconceptions, which were, and still are, the main aims of the whole process. Egypt refused, in 2004, to receive the deputy secretary general of the Alliance, saying that 'It sees no role for the alliance in reform efforts in the region'.[88] At this time, no convincing explanation about the reasons of this position was given, but it could be ascribed to the uncertainty that shadowed the reason of the proposed visit, and whether or not it would tackle the issues of democratisation as well as other issues mentioned earlier, in order to reinforce and strengthen international pressure that had reached its peak by the launching of the G8 initiative.

Following the Istanbul Summit, former Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher expressed Egypt's surprise at the launching of NATO proposals without prior consultation with the parties concerned. He then reiterated Egypt's principled position of opposing the policies of alliances and its refusal of any sort of membership.[89] It seems that Egypt's snub of the visit of NATO's deputy secretary general led to NATO marginalising – if not excluding – Egypt from advanced consultations that had preceded the proposals launched at the 2004 Istanbul Summit.

This caution prevailed even after the participation of the new Egyptian foreign minister in the first working dinner that was held, in December 2004, between the foreign ministers of the allies and MD partners.

Indicatively, Egypt's foreign minister said in March 2006:

> There are still some topics that need to be clarified and explained through the NATO-Med dialogue, such as worries and questions about adopting or integrating the principle of pre-emptive actions into NATO doctrine; ambiguity that has characterised the alliance's criteria for its intervention internationally, and the limits of its role in facing the dangers of what are called 'failing states' and terrorism; and whether or not this orientation would put more pressure on the people's inherent right in resisting occupation.[90]

Shaban in interview mentions that Egypt is still concerned about the adherence of the Alliance to the principles of international law, and the limits of its new role after the transformation process. He says that 'In fact, what happened in Kosovo raised concerns in various countries. Also, we are not ready to accept

any form of international intervention in our national affairs, under the slogan of reform and democratisation'.[91]

Moreover, amidst the uproar of the Israeli–Hizbullah war in summer 2006, Egypt declared its opposition to proposals to call in NATO forces to preserve security in the border area between Israel and Lebanon.[92] International and regional powers agreed to put in place an international peacekeeping force instead of inviting NATO to play this role.

However, things have improved by way of the frequent consultations that followed afterwards and the visit of former Secretary General Scheffer in 2005.

'K.H.' in interview clarifies that 'Egypt is in constant dialogue with the alliance. We are developing the relationship to the extent and on the pace that we deem serves our national interests'.[93]

Relevant documents revealed that some developments have taken place afterwards. These significant events can be summarised as follows:

1 The two parties accomplished an Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP)[94] on 9 October 2007. It is the second individual programme, after Israel, to be concluded between the Alliance and a MD partner. In the preamble, it is mentioned that 'Egypt is willing to achieve the following objectives: a) promotion of political and military ties between the Euro-Atlantic and the Mediterranean regions along with security cooperation with NATO and MD partners in order to enhance Mediterranean regional security and stability; b) contribution to international and regional stability and peace utilising NATO multi-dimensional experiences to facilitate peaceful solutions to regional conflicts; and c) coordination of NATO and Egyptian efforts to achieve a certain degree of interoperability, notably in the following aspects: the fight against terrorism; peacekeeping operations; humanitarian relief operations; search and rescue; border security; and the fight against illegal trafficking.[95]

   The first two items (a and b) reflect the mutual desire of the two parties to reinforce the regional role of each other. To elaborate, while NATO can take advantage of the heritage of Egypt's traditional role in the region, Egypt can secure for herself a distinctive level of cooperation with NATO, bearing in mind the evolving role of NATO in addressing regional problems in the Middle East.

   In the third item (c), the two parties, reciprocally, are achieving their aims. Egypt, on the one hand, is supposed to benefit from NATO's experience in these fields – e.g. terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, etc. Meanwhile, NATO, on the other hand, is achieving its aims of preparing the technical staff of Egypt in such a way that could facilitate joint operations between the two parties in the foreseeable future.

   In Paragraph 2, on the scope of the ICP, Egypt reiterates its long-standing policies that any cooperation with NATO in the field of peacekeeping must come under the umbrella of the United Nations with the agreement of regional organisations.[96] This formula reflects the desire of Egypt to keep some distance from NATO-led operations in the future. Egypt also stipulates, on this

item, indirect conditionality that any cooperation will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

In the same paragraph, the two parties pledge to exchange intelligence in the fight against terrorism (Paragraph 2b).[97] This is most important as it embodies the first serious mutual cooperation between the two parties in the field of combating terrorism. This also signals the enlarging role that NATO is trying to play in this respect.

Some positive signs of the constructive relationship are shown in various parts of this programme. For example, Egypt has undertaken to provide lecturers to NATO schools and colleges[98] and pledged to support NATO's public diplomacy efforts by hosting its seminars for political dialogue with Egyptian governmental and non-governmental actors[99] and accepted exchange visits between high officials of the two parties.[100]

In Paragraph 3, Egypt was granted the right to participate as an observer in research and technology activities in areas of concern to the armed forces.[101]

More importantly, it was agreed in Section 4 that NATO would assist Egypt in preparing and equipping a field hospital to provide medical assistance in WMD incidents, along with equipping a battalion to participate in peacekeeping operations.[102]

The ICP programme, although not legally binding, could be considered a groundbreaking document in the evolving relationship between NATO and the entire region of the Middle East, bearing in mind the influential role Egypt has always played in the region. Indicatively, other Arab MD partners have started negotiating their respective individual programmes following the Egyptian lead.

2 The two parties have been in constant negotiations with regards to drafting a convention for the protection of classified information.[103] This will pave the way for more advanced forms of cooperation between the parties with regards to the most serious and dangerous issues like terrorism.

3 It is also worth mentioning that Egyptian participation has increased considerably in recent years. The Egyptian documents reveal that Egypt did participate from 1995 to 2001 in a number of activities, ranging from 20 to 30.[104] In the second period, from 2001 to 2006, Egypt became eager to participate more efficiently and increasingly. This participation has reached, currently, about 70 activities, among them 56 of a military nature. This clearly shows that Egypt is keen to gain advantage from NATO's endeavour in the region.

Logically, the special relationship between Egypt and the United States has pushed Egypt to respond more positively to NATO's role in the region in the post-9/11 context. In other words, Egypt seems to have realised that the calculations of its national interests required changing – or at least reducing the intensity of – its traditional reserved position.

A senior official of the Egyptian MFA (M.B.) in interview mentions that there is recognition that NATO is serving many objectives of US policy. First, NATO's

concerted activities are aimed at achieving military normalisation between the Arabs and Israel, which has been among the priorities of US foreign policy. Second, its operation in the Mediterranean aims at inspecting the ships that might transfer or carry weapons to some countries, like Syria and Iran. Over and above, the interlinked relationship between ICI and MD comes in conformity with visions that have appeared recently about what is said to be the Wider or Broader Middle East. He concludes by saying, 'These aims have been more obvious and understandable in the second stage of NATO's role in the region that started after the events of 9/11'.[105]

Another factor that has encouraged Egypt to soften its reserved position and take further steps in widening and deepening its existing relationship with NATO is its growing role, particularly in the post-9/11 era, with respect to coordinating international and regional efforts in combating terrorism. Since the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat in October 1981 by Al-Jihad, Egypt has suffered from terrorist threats that seriously shook the country's stability in 1990s by targeting tourist sites, bearing in mind that tourism is the main source of hard currency for the country that has long been suffering from chronic economic problems. The same group, Al-Jihad, tried several times to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak in the 1990s. No surprise, the Egyptian regime has always shown readiness to cooperate with international players in exchanging information and coordinating efforts on terrorism. This notwithstanding, NATO and Egypt have achieved limited success in their joint efforts on combating terrorism together, because of the inherent complexity in such a cooperation. This could be understood bearing in mind the difficulty of sharing secret information with an alliance that consists of 26 countries.

Commenting on the same issue, 'K.E.' in interview expresses his conviction that NATO should and is able to play a very constructive role in this respect. He mentions that:

> To start with, NATO should clarify its position and policy regarding the wrong mix between Islam and terrorism. Using some terms like 'Islamic terrorism' or 'Islamic fascism' is destabilising our security, giving the terrorist groups in our country the incentive and convincing argument to recruit more youth to face what is perceived to be Western hostility against Islam. Certainly, NATO can direct its member states to pay due importance to this issue.[106]

Arguably, the noticeable degree of Egyptian openness towards NATO's new role in the region is the result of striking a balance between the factor of its strategic alliance with the United States and calculations of national security. For example, Egypt prefers to conduct military exercises and manoeuvres with some NATO allies, among them, of course, the United States, but does not want to do the same with NATO forces. Indeed, it appears that Egypt does not want to directly support NATO's endeavour of gaining experience and accessibility in the territories of the

Middle East. Implicitly, this reflects Egyptian unease towards enlarging NATO's existence in the region.

Finally, Karem in interview confirms that since the Istanbul Summit, Mediterranean Dialogue has been elevated to a genuine partnership with the overall objective to contribute to regional security and stability, and he has reasons to believe that Egypt's partnership with NATO has reached a state of maturity that might not be the case with others, because 'Egypt and NATO moved closer in the past few years. We welcome this trend and look forward to reinforcing it. The road might not be narrow after all'.[107]

In sum, in the first period from 1995 to 2001, the relationship between Egypt and NATO was confined to the ordinary exchange of views regarding regional issues of mutual concern. After developing an awareness of the beneficial aspects of enhancing cooperation with the Alliance, and taking into account the post-9/11 atmosphere that requires and necessitates cooperation with international initiatives, a cautious Egypt has decided to enlarge and strengthen its cooperative links with NATO, despite its concerns about NATO's intentions towards the region and the limits of its international role.

This case study emphasises that cooperation, even at a slow or limited pace, could lead eventually to more fruitful cooperation. In the same context, changing state preferences is not, as proven, a remote possibility. Instead, it is very possible, with time and once the presented ideas and/or proposals have been absorbed. Also important is that continued consultations – i.e. a systematic exchange of information – have improved the relationship between the two parties. In addition, creating shared interests, as was clarified in the Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP), will surely facilitate achieving more progress in the future. All these factors match with the basic assumptions of liberal institutionalism.

The NATO–Kuwait relationship: an ICI case study

The reasons for choosing Kuwait as a case study, and a sample of ICI partners, is that it is the first Gulf country that welcomed the new NATO endeavour to enlarge its role in the Wider Middle East.

Kuwait, which contains one of the largest reserves of crude oil in the region, has always enjoyed a unique relationship with the West in general, and the United States in particular. After being invaded by Iraq in 1990, an international coalition, led by the United States, liberated Kuwait in 1991 and deployed forces there. Since then, Kuwait has always kept advanced relationships with the great powers in order to secure itself from further threat from the now ousted regime of Saddam Hussein. This was crystallised by signing various security cooperation treaties with the big five, the permanent members of the Security Council, providing what is called 'mutual protection'.

Consistent with this long-standing policy, Kuwait was the first member of the Gulf Cooperation Council to declare its acceptance of the ICI, once it was launched at the 2004 Istanbul Summit. Even before this, the two parties – NATO

and Kuwait – were exploring the horizon of their prospective relationship through consultations conducted within the formula 26 + 1.[108] Instantly after launching the ICI, the two parties exchanged visits to formalise aspects of possible cooperation. The high level of visits, on the level of Kuwait's National Security Bureau and the deputy secretary general of NATO, reflected the seriousness and determination of the two parties to pursue cooperation seriously as well as urgently.[109]

Understandably, Kuwait, by doing this, was trying to enhance its connections with the largest and strongest alliance in today's world, bearing in mind the enduringly dangerous situation in the Gulf, especially in light of Iran's nuclear programme.

El Mula in interview mentions that the growing relationship between NATO and Kuwait goes back to the early 1990s when the United States, and most of the allies at that time, sent troops to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Since then, she adds, Kuwait was very cautious and keen not to allow the repetition of the Iraqi invasion. That is why, 'We were the first to join ICI. It is the initiative that is supposed to complement MD within the framework of NATO's strategy in addressing the Broader Middle East. Adding to this, we do have another formula for the bilateral cooperation with NATO (26 + 1), in the context of which we can maintain our private and distinctive relationship with the Alliance'.[110]

Elbasr in interview mentions that 'Our immediate response came as a part of the continuous effort to achieve the goals of our national interest in terms of development and modernisation'.[111] He further reveals that this policy was not coordinated with other Gulf countries, saying that:

> There is no unified policy for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with regard to NATO's policies and initiatives towards the Gulf area. Every country decides what it deems is the best for its interests. Moreover, the Istanbul initiative was only targeting individual countries. NATO did not want to address the Gulf countries as one entity in order to avoid the delay that might have occurred because of the late response of one or two countries.[112]

As far as the pattern of cooperation between NATO and Kuwait is concerned, it focuses mainly upon training Kuwait's personnel and enhancing the ability to cooperate with each other. Indicatively, the pace of cooperation has been fruitful in this short period. Sufficiently, Kuwait participated in more than 20 activities proposed by the Alliance.[113] The overall aim of these activities was to increase the pace and depth of mutual interaction between the two parties – NATO and Kuwait – in order to achieve the required level of interoperability.

So far, the ongoing relationship has not included any military task that might constitute a change or a significant contribution to Gulf security.

Elbasr in interview mentions that cooperation with NATO is to complement, not to substitute, the security agreements that Kuwait previously signed with the United States and other big powers. It is different in the sense that its focus is on modernisation. This is to be achieved by drawing experience through the educational and training programmes that NATO is offering in various fields, such as

combating illegal activities and civil emergency planning. He also adds that 'the number of activities has increased significantly and this reflects the successful implementation of NATO's policy in the region'.[114]

Elbasr in interview also adds:

> Our keenness to develop our relationship with NATO, despite the fact that it doesn't include any military aspects, could be ascribed to our desire to get the maximum benefits from the biggest alliance that combines democratic countries. This element of democratic governance gives us great assurance and appeases worries … I mean that those democratically governed allies would not change their policies in such a swift or unexpected manner, unlike despotic regimes.[115]

As for areas of future cooperation, Osman in interview says, 'Recently, we have established in cooperation with NATO and Bahrain a regional crisis management centre. We need to enhance cooperation in the fields of combating terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and border security. In return, we shall facilitate maritime passage of NATO's vessels in the Gulf'.[116]

In addition to this, the two parties signed a convention for the protection of classified information two years ago. This would, certainly, facilitate the exchange of intelligence information about long-standing terrorist security threats in the region.[117]

Although NATO has not proposed any form of hard security cooperation, its role in the region as such would, certainly, contribute positively in backing up American policies in the region, particularly in Iraq. For example, the two parties signed a special agreement with regards to transportation of forces and logistics through Kuwaiti ports to support its ongoing military mission in Iraq.[118]

The creation and then enhancement of the NATO–Kuwait relationship was encouraged by the United States, bearing in mind the special relationship between Washington and Kuwait. This ongoing process will not, as Kuwait's officials confirm, enable other European allies to intervene more than necessary in Gulf security.

Elbasr in interview discloses that:

> The Americans were persuading us to develop our relationship with the alliance. I can confirm that Ambassador Burns, the US representative to NATO, urged us to respond positively with what was proposed by NATO. In general, I want confirm that our cooperative ties with NATO did not mean any reduction of the huge American role in securing the Gulf area … Let me put it more clearly, NATO is serving the policies of its allies, and it will never collide with those policies. It would be wrong to expect that the growing role of the alliance in the region could enable European allies to have a different 'say' in the region.[119]

To conclude, the NATO–Kuwait relationship, that took its preliminary steps in early 1990s, though in different form, has developed significantly since 2002. This means that NATO has assumed a wider role in the Broader Middle East post-9/11. This policy is supportive of, and cannot be separated from, American policies in the region.

Perhaps more clearly than in the first case study (the NATO–Egypt relationship), this relationship confirms the applicability of the basic principles of liberal institutionalism for various reasons. First, the two parties have had a strong determination to boost their security through creating cooperative links, which means they believe in the beneficial results of this cooperation. Second, NATO, as an institution, is being used to back up the basic role of the United States in guaranteeing Gulf security. In other words, there is 'burden sharing' between NATO and the US in this respect, and this underlines the role of institutions in achieving the interests of allies and outside partners, though not necessarily on an equal footing.

Kuwait has resoundly welcomed this contribution from NATO to serve its security interests. Equally important is NATO's ability to fulfil Kuwait's training needs, which shows that institutions, by nature, can realise many objectives. Third, NATO's role was presented in this context as an auxiliary factor. This hints that the NATO–Kuwait relationship was optional, not imposed by either the United States or NATO itself. More bluntly, this cooperation, as liberal institutionalism indicates, was not dictated by hegemonic power.

Conclusion

In analysing NATO's post-9/11 policy in the Middle East, it can be concluded that it has unfolded in full consistency with the basic principles of liberal institutionalism, as was the case in the first phase of NATO's emerging role in the region. The only significant difference between the phases was enlarging the scope of that role, in extending cooperation to the Gulf, and then enhancing, reinforcing and diversifying ongoing activities with all states concerned. Nothing else has changed in the nature of this cooperative relationship and it has never included any form of coercion or oppression.

Hence, the second phase of NATO's role could be considered the 'progress' that confirms the utility and accuracy of the basic assumptions of liberal institutionalist theory, which underlines the importance of international cooperation based on deep conviction and trust in human nature, and that state actions can be rational as they reflect the attitudes of rational individuals.

The process also illustrates the importance of individual perceptions as well as the impact of ideas and information on world affairs, including first and foremost changing state preferences and perceptions in such a manner that could serve wider peace and stability. Indeed, fostering cooperation with NATO has proven more feasible, and even easier, for Middle Eastern partners than pursuing cooperation among themselves.

The main themes of this policy include the following:

1 Enhancing the efforts and abilities of NATO and its Middle Eastern partners in combating international terrorism. This includes launching new channels for information sharing, joint operations and training, etc.
2 Combating the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. This was reflected in encouraging Middle Eastern partners (via ICI and MD) to join NATO in certain rounds of consultations and to increase understanding of the visions and requirements of each other. Still, very limited results have been achieved.
3 Supporting efforts to spread democratic values in the region. Wisely perhaps, NATO did not get involved directly in this matter, its role confined to its readiness to give tailored advice about new topics like civilian control of military institutions and defence reform, etc. These newly proposed topics are supposed to soften the rigid autocratic atmosphere and encourage internal debate about its possible usefulness.
4 Increasing the number of proposed fields of practical cooperation. The main objective, as illustrated, is to enhance the possibility of working together in future missions, like peacemaking and peacekeeping as well as in areas of mutual concern.
5 It is American influence that gave birth to the new NATO initiatives addressing the Middle East region. Nothing significant happened in the 1990s. However, a new momentum was instantly given to NATO in the post-9/11 years, enabling it to assume its new role in the Middle East.
6 It is also the influence of the United States that pushed some Middle Eastern partners to accept or respond positively to the new NATO proposals. Even before this, it should not be ignored that one of the reasons that had convinced MD partners – six Arab countries and Israel – to respond positively to NATO's initiative was their conviction that the United States was behind the process, and/or the United States and NATO are two sides of one coin.
7 It is true that the new NATO initiatives support, complement and serve the aims of US foreign policy, but they are also, at the same time, serving the interests of other European allies.

It could be claimed that the above-mentioned aspects are consistent with international and Western orientations towards the region that have emerged as a result of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Even if these initiatives were launched to cope with – and respond to – the aftermath of those terrorist events, the fact that should not be ignored or underestimated is that these activities are beneficial for European interests and were launched after having achieved internal consensus between European allies and the United States, either on equal footing or in varying degrees of influence.

The prioritising of issues of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction should not be perceived as only American concerns. On the contrary, they also meet European security needs. The Solana Paper of 2003 shows that the main security concerns of the EU included terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, failed states and organised crime.[120] Consequently, there is no big difference between Europe and United States.

Rademacher in interview mentions:

> NATO's outreach programmes vis-à-vis the region and Allies' respective national positions and policies have to be compatible. How could you otherwise reach a consensus within NATO on what to do? And NATO works by consensus. If an Ally felt that what NATO was planning to do would run counter to her interests, it would not agree to it. Moreover, there are differences in the extent to which the respective MD partners wish to cooperate with NATO. Some are ready to go further than others. In other words, I don't think that this is just black and white.[121]

Also, Oguzlu indicates that European security strategy and the EU's neighbourhood policies reflect the understanding of the vulnerability of the Europeans to the growing risk of radical religious terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. This argument underlines that the Europeans have the same priorities as the United States in the post-9/11 era.[122]

Furthermore, implementing the policy of 'positive engagement' in the Middle East region, regardless of its narrow or wide definition, is increasing the ability of the North Atlantic Alliance, in its broader definition, to influence or at least follow closely regional affairs. Therefore, claim could be made that NATO's role in the Middle East, via MD and ICI, is not an exclusive tool of US foreign policy. Instead, it is one of the available tools that are being used to achieve the interests of all NATO members – but first and foremost the United States – in the region. Nonetheless, confirmation could be made that influential American pressure on both parties of the existing equation, NATO and the Middle East, was the primary – if not the only reason – that has transformed a previously limited and low profile security dialogue into an effective mechanism that is backing up other efforts aiming to incur required change and modernisation in the region.

5 The United States and NATO's role in the Middle East

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first gives a brief description of the vision of the US 'new conservatives', or neo-cons of former President Bush's administration, on the role of the United States in the world. This will help build an understanding as to why and how this vision has impacted on Middle Eastern politics, bearing in mind that the Middle East has long been the focal point of international concern, particularly post-9/11. Also, reference is made to the importance of NATO in the US foreign policy agenda.

The second part, concisely, reviews developments in US policy towards NATO's cooperative mechanisms, particularly MD and ICI, before and after 9/11. Thereafter more focus is given to reviewing and analysing the extent and limits of NATO's role with regards to regional issues in the Middle East. The aim is to ascertain whether or not this role has developed in full consistency with the objectives of US foreign policy. This is aided by examining two contemporary crises: Iraq and Darfur.

Post-9/11 America and the Middle East

As history shows, it is always tempting for any superpower to use its might in pursuit of its national goals, regardless of ethical, legal and moral considerations. This has been evident in the practices of all great powers throughout history. Suffice it to refer to the brutal practices of the 19th century colonial campaigns launched by European powers, like France, Italy and England in Middle Eastern territories. The United States is no exception, particularly after its pride was wounded by the unprecedented 9/11 attacks.

Evidently, post-9/11 US policy towards the Middle East region has been different than policies pursued in previous eras. Understandably, the equation is no longer just 'oil and stability at any price'. Instead, the pride and security of the lone superpower have been added to the mix. Put another way, the United States has started to perceive its role in the world – particularly in the Middle East – differently. Chapter 2 reviews the US vision about democracy in the Middle East, which is why more focus is given here to other aspects of US policy.

To elaborate, just as the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised the end of the Cold War, the 9/11 attacks gave birth to a new era, branded by one former US secretary

of state as the 'post-post-Cold-War era'. As the new decade has unfolded, the neo-cons in the new Republican administration, challenged by the dangers of terrorism, threats to oil and other risks, forged a new vision of American roles in this new epoch. They appear to be determined to use the full strength of American power not only to defend the United States from any possible contingencies, but also to rebuild the international system in such a way as to preserve and prolong the durability of its unique and unequalled status.[1] Clearly they believe in, and fully adhere to, what is described by McCrisken as 'the missionary strand of American exceptionalism'.[2]

What is meant by this is that they hold the belief that the United States, driven by its enduring values as well as its vital interests, should shoulder the burden of creating the world of peace, freedom and democracy, no matter how big the consequences and sacrifices might be.

In his introduction to the 2006 national security strategy,[3] which is the comprehensive US document stating the basic guidelines of Bush's administration foreign policy, former President Bush said, 'America has to choose between the path of fear, isolationism and protectionism, retreat and retrenchment, and the path of confidence'.[4] He continued, 'We choose leadership over isolationism, and the pursuit of free and fair trade and open markets over protectionism; we choose to deal with challenges now rather than leaving them to future generations'.[5]

Then, the president explained that this national security strategy is founded on two pillars. The first is promoting freedom, justice and human dignity, working to end tyranny and promote effective democracies. The second is 'Confronting the challenges of our time – such as pandemic disease, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and human trafficking, etc., by leading a growing community of democracies'.[6]

The 2006 strategy identified the following tasks as priorities:

> Champion aspirations for human dignity; strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends; work with others to defuse regional conflicts; prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, our friends, with weapons of mass destruction; ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade; expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy; develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power; transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century; and engage the opportunities and confront the challenges of globalisation.[7]

However, the vision of the Bush administration seemed to be definitely based on a different set of priorities, as was evident from its performance in the latter years. According to Ness, these priorities focused upon maximisation of military power, conventional as well as nuclear capabilities, because 'Their worldview was a combination of a Manichean ideology about pitting good against evil, and a Realist commitment to the construction of such overwhelming capabilities

(military, economic and technological) that no other state or coalition of states would dare to confront the United States'.[8] To make it clearer, the United States, in Bush's era, appeared to have been more adamant than in any other period in its efforts to secure its pre-eminent position in the international arena.

The group of neo-cons seemed to take the view that this vision can only be achieved by applying tougher policies, even resorting to imperial expansion if necessary.

Feller remarks:

> There are a few hardliners who were, and still are, adamant in their persistence of transforming US foreign policy along the lines of Reaganism. In such a scenario, a newly-confident United States, intoxicated with its own military, economic and political pre-eminence would set out to remake the world in its own image, targeting adversaries, ignoring allies, and acting with all the arrogance of a country that believes itself above criticism, a country in short that is on a power trip.[9]

Furthermore, Rogers expresses the view that the neo-cons hold a belief that 'the United States had an historic mission to promote a "New American Century" in which the world community follows a path towards free market democracies, led and controlled by the United States'.[10] Gaffney proposes that:

> When the Nazis, Fascists, Imperial Japanese and Soviet Communists sought to destroy and enslave the free world, we must do now what we did then: wage war creatively and effectively, using non-military as well as military means, on a global scale. Now as then, we must understand the necessity of fully mobilising the energy, courage, and imagination of freedom-loving people, starting with putting the country on a war footing, as if our lives, and way of life, depend on it.[11]

On the same theme, Chomsky states:

> After 9/11, the fundamental assumption that lies behind the 'imperial grand strategy' is the guiding principle of Wilsonian idealism that we, at least the circle who provide the leadership and advise them, are good, even noble; hence our interventions are necessarily righteous in intent, if occasionally clumsy in execution.[12]

On the contrary, other arguments warn from exaggerating the influence of this group in determining US foreign policy, which has always been based on a calculation of interests. For example, Foster comments, 'It is unfortunately all too easy to slide into the crude notion that imperialist expansion is simply a product of a powerful group of individuals who have hijacked a nation's foreign policy to serve their own narrow ends'.[13]

Irrespective of these views, it is important, at this point, to underline that this vision for the American project gained considerable popular support in US society, regardless of its huge cost in terms of spilling the blood of hundreds of thousands of victims and the fiscal burden on the American economy.[14] The success of Bush's campaign for the second presidential term seems to point to a dramatic change in attitudes. This can be ascribed to the psychological effects of the unforgettable and unforgivable terrorist attacks, and/or the influence of the media and interest groups that believe in or get benefits from the programme of the neo-conservatives. The first sentence former President Bush wrote in the introduction of the 2006 NSS was 'America is at war'.[15] This could be an attempt to justify anything mentioned in the document. Bamford observes that 'the Bush administration's massive disinformation campaign, abetted by a lazy and timid press, succeeded spectacularly in driving the public to support its long-planned war'.[16]

In a similar vein, Herrmann and Reese note, 'In the highly charged atmosphere following 9/11, popular mobilisation for war and for imperial moral missions to change the nature of politics in far off lands was at least conceivable in ways that it had not been prior to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington'.[17]

This new wave of US assertive policy, which is being implemented in what could be described as a power vacuum because of the absence of any international balance to the uncontested American strength, had its direct impact in the Middle East region via the launching of the 2003 Iraq war. Jentleson states that 'George W Bush's belief system is closer to that of his father, but more unilateralist and assertive of American military power'.[18] This harsh policy is not easily differentiated from what some describe as American imperialism.

For more elaboration, Fouskas and Cokay maintain that 'American imperialism is distinguished from all other imperialisms because of its global extension'. They mention that neo-imperial expansionist strategy relies on military power to reach its end because of the decline of the US economy and note that its ideological origins can be traced back to the guiding principles of the Truman Doctrine. They add:

> US foreign policy has a hypocritical character, as US policy makers use moral principles to deceive peoples. So many covert US military and intelligence operations and campaigns, so many business deals, so much oil and natural gas, and all these giant multinational corporations have powerful connections to the Bush administration, as a convergence of political and economic interests travelling under the rubrics of war on terror, operation Enduring Freedom, axis of evil, and bringing democracy to former communist states, all the interventions in Yugoslavia, various political and economic crises, the recent US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, all have collectively been the response to the problems created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and all have connections to the larger contests between the United States and its European allies over the division of resources and the political and military control of Eurasia, undertaken by the United States to stem its economic decline.[19]

In the 2006 national security strategy, the then US president reviewed what he counted as the achievements of the past few years, saying:

> We have kept on the offensive against terrorist networks, leaving our enemy weakened, but not yet defeated; we have joined the Afghan people to bring down the Taliban regime; we have focused the attention of the world on the proliferation of dangerous weapons; we have stood for the spread of democracy in the broader Middle East; we led an international coalition to topple the dictator of Iraq.[20]

The US president concluded, 'The path we have chosen is consistent with the great tradition of American foreign policy; like the policies of Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan', thus underlining that US aims are 'idealistic' but the means to achieve them are 'realistic'.[21]

Seemingly, the document illuminated what has been pointed out by some scholars that America was, and still is, seeking to profit from a unique set of historical circumstances – i.e. the uni-polar system – to apply and impose its vision worldwide.[22] The first step in this endeavour is to change the Middle East, as explained in Chapter 1.[23]

Folk indicates that the major concern of the neo-conservative agenda is the Middle East, not Europe, because the neo-cons believe that the region will be the major history-making area in the coming decade. The main objective of the invasion of Iraq, he argues, is to secure a base that could help to dominate the region in the future.[24]

But the task of changing the Middle East is too complicated, by all means, to be achieved in the foreseeable future. Quandt suggests that the United States will face a strong Middle Eastern opposition and resistance against its attempt to impose its own design on the region, and this suggests that the region will remain a troubled area, and that the United States will have to face huge obstacles in pursuing its multiple objectives there.[25]

Based on this conviction, the United States, as indicted before, has opted to use NATO to the maximum possible extent to help in achieving its vision in the Middle East.

NATO in US foreign policy

Briefly, the North Atlantic Alliance has always been a top priority of US foreign policy. Since its establishment by the 1949 Washington Treaty, NATO served as an indispensable forum for coordinating defence and security policies with European allies during the long decades of the Cold War. During the Cold War, many factors strongly tied the United States and its European allies together, among which, the desire of Europe for protection under the US nuclear umbrella by way of advanced US conventional capabilities, which were – and still are – beyond comparison relative to European capabilities. A mixture of fear and need was reflected positively in NATO as a defensive alliance empowered and authorised to defend the Euro-Atlantic territories against possible Soviet attack.

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, doubts emerged about NATO's vitality in the post-Cold War era. It appeared as if the Alliance felt a need to justify its existence in this new era. The United States has pushed the transformation process forward, changing and developing the role of the Alliance, as explained earlier. NATO's continuity, regardless of its efficiency or efficacy, was – and still is – a lynchpin serving many objectives of US foreign policy:

1 It is the only forum in which the United States can prove and project its leadership over European allies, bearing in mind that the United States has always borne the largest costs of maintaining and developing the North Atlantic Alliance.
2 It reflects and projects the eminence and superiority of the Untied States and/or the Western community vis-à-vis other great powers, like Russia and China, as well as other civilisations. As it stands, it is a very effective military tool that can be used by Western powers collectively to defend their 'common interests', i.e. the interests of the Western community or the North Atlantic Alliance. Meanwhile, other great powers do not enjoy such protection, as no present military alliance and/or arrangements could be comparable to NATO.
3 It is one of the tools of promoting the American visions and policies with regards to world security. Reference has been made before to the impact of the enlargement process as well as Partnership for Peace programmes on enhancing the stability of Europe and encircling Russia, etc.
4 It is a vehicle for promoting American values and norms. For example, certain values and standards, like democracy and human rights, are among the requirements of admitting new members as well as PFP partners, etc. The notions of democracy and human rights have been long placed at the top of the US foreign policy agenda, regardless of harsh US policies and practices, before and after 9/11, that might cast doubt on the extent to which the United States adheres to these values.[26]
5 Moreover, the evolving relationship between NATO and its peripheries, including South Asia, the Caucasus and the Middle East, is serving the aims of US global strategy in one way or another. To elaborate, the United States can easily get benefits from constant consultations conducted within the existing framework of relations between NATO and those areas, to promote US visions about regional crises, as well as other global security concerns, like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, etc. Being the uncontested leader of NATO, the United States is able to set, or at least influence more than any other ally, NATO's policies towards these regions.

Clement argues that the United States regards NATO as an embodiment of collective transatlantic interests that provides military protection as well as the necessary political cohesion and solidarity among all its members. It also 'helps to sustain, reinforce, and legitimise US foreign policy'.[27]

Sadakata maintains that the United States, in general, is keen to use international organisations to spread burdens among their members, manage or control

the existing risks and promote its values; and all these support its universal interests and help it maintain its predominant position in the global system.[28]

In the post-9/11 years, NATO's centrality for US foreign policy has been questioned, although the Alliance did show determination, from the first moment, to assume its basic duty in providing the United States with help and assistance.[29] The swift response of the United States to 9/11 by invading Afghanistan, and later Iraq, proved that the post-9/11 United States does not need NATO, strictly speaking, in implementing its policies. In reality, the United States, like any other leading state, could never be bound by institutions in implementing its policies.[30] As underlined earlier, one challenge to the United States in this regard is NATO's decision-making mechanism, which is based on consensus and requires that all decisions must be unanimous.

Michta states that NATO has recently lost much of its importance as a military alliance because of its ongoing transformation process that has changed its nature from a collective defence organisation into a collective security organisation. So, 'NATO today seems to be turning into what the EU's security dimension once was – i.e. a forum where policies and standards were discussed and harmonised but where little action could be taken'.[31]

Bennis says that despite the fact that NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history, the United States acted unilaterally in Afghanistan and this immediate response 'demonstrated unequivocally not only American power in its own right, but the vast gap between US military capacity and that of any other country or any other group of countries'.[32] He adds, however, that NATO accepted, shortly afterwards, all US requests to support the mission, including unlimited access to ports, airfields, other military venues and airspaces; use of early warning aircraft; replacement of US troops rotated out of Balkan peacekeeping assignments; and more.[33]

Importantly, this unilateral trend, that reached its peak in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, has waned. Seemingly, the United States found that it was not well prepared to deal rapidly, and alone, with the various repercussions of 9/11, including the requirements of new trends of its foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East. Consequently, an increasing recognition in the US of a need for NATO's support has developed gradually. Likewise, NATO has come to realise that it needs to develop new policies to handle the Middle Eastern challenges.

Nakic argues that as a result of 9/11, the United States and NATO have identified international terrorism and all its supportive factors, like failed states, as their first priority, although, 'Presently, neither the US nor NATO is adequately ready for optimal defence against asymmetric threats'.[34]

Clement mentions that the United States embraced unilateral military actions in the post-9/11 years, 'yet it continued to rely on a variety of multilateral frameworks including standing alliances like NATO, which embodied a permanent framework of shared interests, as well as an extensive web of flexible, adaptable, ad hoc coalitions, tailored to particular missions'.[35]

Having reviewed these varying positions, an assessment could be made that the United States has tried to utilise NATO, as much as possible, in serving its new vision for the Middle East.

US policy and the NATO–Middle East relationship

Current available literature on US policy and NATO's role in the Middle East does not lead to any solid conclusions. On the contrary, it leaves intact a level of uncertainty about various aspects of NATO's role in the Middle East and US intentions.

On the one hand, some believe that NATO's every move necessarily supports the US's strategic vision for the future of the Middle East region. For instance, Fouskas explains that 'Given NATO's unstoppable eastward expansion, a US presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia – which follows that in the Gulf, Yemen and Saudi Arabia – provides strategic depth to the management and control of the region's energy resources for the US and its closest allies'.[36]

On the other hand, some argue that NATO's role is not always a reflection of American desires. For example, Winrow affirms that NATO is not a monolithic organisation, proof being that the United States has not always succeeded in convincing its NATO partners to pursue a certain policy. Instead, it has sometimes been obliged to accommodate the interests of its allies.[37]

Furthermore, some argue that the two pillars of the North Atlantic Alliance are being forced to coordinate their visions and policies in order to deal with Middle Eastern regional challenges. Geipel comments on the differences between the United States and Europe, saying that:

> It matters that the US and Europe are divided about the future of their engagement in the Middle East for two very important reasons. First, it matters because the success of the US vision will be proportional to the engagement or at least acquiescence of allies. Second, it matters because the North Atlantic Alliance itself cannot survive in a meaningful way if it is internally at odds over the most significant international challenges of the twenty-first century.[38]

Art confirms that there is a convergence of the basic objectives of the two pillars of NATO, the United States and the European allies, based on the content of former President Bush's 2002 national security strategy and the 2003 Solana Paper, and 'there is even an agreement on the need for preventive actions, although there is maybe disagreement on what preventive action means'.[39]

Chubin *et al*. mention that the United States and Europe will continue to be engaged in the region and, at the same time, 'For the time being, the West – and in particular the United States – will continue to be seen as the principal problem in the eyes of the Arab world'.[40]

Meanwhile, others believe the United States is implementing its policies with or without NATO's direct assistance. Because of the complexity of the region and the gap between the European allies and the United States on aspects of Middle Eastern policy, even the United States itself cannot guarantee the durable availability of NATO as a tool for its foreign policy. Some conclude, therefore, that the Alliance has become obsolete, even in the eyes of its leader.

Hubel and Kaim mention that 'As the US-led military campaign against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan had already demonstrated in late 2001,

NATO was no longer the key framework for major transatlantic military–political decision making'.[41] Han mentions that 'NATO's centrality as the Euro-American security pivot is unlikely to be restored. European and American interests usually overlap, but every so often they are also at variance'.[42] Sloan mentions that 'There is no simple way to eliminate US unilateralist tendencies. They are, to some extent, unavoidable given the current distribution of power between the US and Europe, and indeed between the US and the rest of the world'.[43]

Gallis states that for the Europeans, any policy of moving outside the NATO treaty area of Europe remains a controversial one; and 'most European allies believe that terrorism can be subdued, not through military action, but primarily through elimination of its underlying causes and through law-enforcement measures'.[44]

Judt warns that:

> To the Bush administration, 'Islam' is an abstraction, the politically serviceable object of what Washington insiders now call the GWOT – the global war on terror. For the US, the Middle East is a faraway land, a convenient place to export America's troubles so that they won't have to be addressed in the homeland. But the Middle East is Europe's near abroad; America's strategy of global confrontation with Islam is not an option for Europe. It is a catastrophe.[45]

Indeed, interviewees were found to hold various views about the centrality of NATO in US Middle Eastern policy, and specifically whether or not it has been used as a tool in implementing its objectives. To start with, some expressed their strong belief that NATO's new orientation towards the Middle East region is a result of, and/or consistent with, US policy towards the region, particularly in the post-9/11 years. These arguments can be illustrated as follows.

Borgomano in interview holds that MD was 'European' before 9/11, becoming 'American' in momentum and orientation. She clarifies, 'All the assets are in the hands of the United States; nothing significant, practically speaking, could be achieved without its support and consent; and this explains why the role of NATO, i.e. the MD and ICI mechanisms, has become more effective post-9/11'.[46]

Ould Cheikh in interview expresses his conviction that the United States has been pressuring both NATO and Middle Eastern partners to develop their relationship. 'All these efforts are emanating from – as well as feeding into – the US foreign policy melting pot'.[47]

Gobreal in interview states that NATO post-9/11 is an 'American process', and it is American influence that has brought all parties to address post-9/11 realities. Most practical post-9/11 cooperative activities are aimed at increasing interoperability between NATO and Middle Eastern countries with regards to combating terrorism, the top priority of the United States.[48]

Daguzan in interview underlines that in addition to the role NATO is playing in the war on terror, it also serves as a mechanism of increasing understanding between some 'Islamic' Middle Eastern countries and the West on several issues,

besides engaging the US's biggest ally, Israel, in security dialogue with other regional players.[49]

A.C. in interview describes NATO as an 'American empire', as everything starts and ends up in Washington, and it is too difficult for any ally to stand against Washington's will. He says, 'For example, my country, Spain, did not agree, on certain occasions, with what was proposed by the United States, but it had to accept it at the end of the day, for the sake of political expediency. This is not something unique or only related to Spain. In fact, many allies frequently do the same'. Consequently, he affirms that NATO's role in the Middle East is fully consistent with the major guidelines of US policies, specifically in the post-9/11 years.[50]

A.P., an official of the German MFA, in interview confirms first that her country opposes enlarging NATO's role in the region, based on the conviction that the Middle East needs political tools, not a military one. Then she explains the role of political expediency in determining the standing of NATO in the Middle East region, saying that:

> Of course, there is an overwhelming influence of the United States in the Middle East that is not comparable, by any means, with what any other ally has. The United States has been intervening in the region since 9/11, and even before, in such a way that it believed it would achieve its interests. Certainly, it has been seeking to use NATO, as much as possible, in achieving its goals. No doubt, the United States has also great influence in drawing NATO's policies in the region. There are other visions within the alliance towards this or that issue in the region, but American influence within the alliance is [very] powerful and effective.

She concludes that what has happened in Iraq is irrefutable evidence of American failure in the Middle East region.[51]

Ammor in interview says that 'as far as the consistency between NATO's role and US policy in the region, I don't see any difference either before or after 9/11. In general, I don't believe that NATO can play anything other than a supportive role to US policies in the region'.[52]

Georgopoulou in interview mentions this new orientation of NATO towards the Middle East region was a direct result of the pressure of the United States that has always maintained unquestioned and incomparable influence in determining the Alliance's policy in general.[53]

Meanwhile, others argue that this role, either before or after 9/11, is a result of a concurrence of views and interests of the allies – i.e. not the expression and reflection of US foreign policy alone.

Eldin in interview holds that NATO is serving the interests of all its allies in the region, and it can serve American interests but only as long as they are intertwined and connected with European interests.[54]

Hardouin in interview disagrees with the position that NATO is an 'American empire', affirming that 'NATO's moves only reflect the concurrence of views of all

allies. Everyone knows that decisions are adopted by consensus. Consequently, there is neither imposition nor enforcement on any ally to follow certain policies'.

Aldwairi in interview concurs, saying that the US administration has always wanted NATO countries to play a more influential role in the US military adventure in the region of the Broader Middle East, but 'it seems that the ball does not always bounce the way it wants to, while the US succeeded in involving NATO in Afghanistan, I don't think it will be able to convince France and Germany to send their troops to Iraq or Palestine, especially as decisions at NATO are taken by consensus.[55]

Rooke in interview affirms that NATO is not a venue for competition or rivalry between allies with regards to the Middle East. Instead, all decisions are taken by consensus, which means that 'There is always a minimum of harmony between all the allies behind every decision'. Therefore, it should not be presumed that there is a complete or full similarity between NATO's moves and US policy in the Middle East, as NATO reflects in its policies the prevailing concurrence between the allies.[56]

Garrido in interview holds that whereas the United States has its own vision towards what is called 'the Greater Middle East', other Southern European allies have their own visions. All of NATO's policies and actions, however, have to be taken by consensus, and this consensus sometimes requires compromise. 'This existing difference normally results in differences in the opinions of allies towards various issues. Generally speaking, we, the Europeans, reduce the intensity; or let me say, focus on achieving the required balance in drawing up NATO's policies.' According to Garrido, NATO is not a mere vehicle for implementing American policies, nor has it become more 'American' than European in the post-9/11 years relative to the Middle East region.[57]

Rodkin in interview refutes the claim that NATO's policy in the region is an American tool on the grounds of two factors: first, that the United States does not need NATO to do what it wants to do, as proven by the invasion of Iraq in 2003; and second, that NATO policy has to be built by consensus, and that NATO's role in the region, before and after 9/11, was and still is supposed to complement other initiatives in the region.[58]

Contrary to the above, Rademacher in interview offers a different point of view. He says, 'I would also take issue with those who argue that the MD was driven by the Europeans before 9/11 and by the Americans ever since. Nor do I believe that it has been "more successful" since 2001 and that this was due to "American momentum". What can be said is that we have seen more momentum because allies and MD partners alike have felt a need to step up cooperation, given the more complex and demanding strategic environment'.[59] The outcome of these above illustrated views is shown in Figure 5.1.

In order to confirm whether or not NATO's role in the Middle East, especially in the post-9/11 years, has become a vehicle of US foreign policy in the region, it is imperative to review and compare the positions of the United States towards the two stages of NATO's involvement in the Middle East – i.e. before and after 9/11.

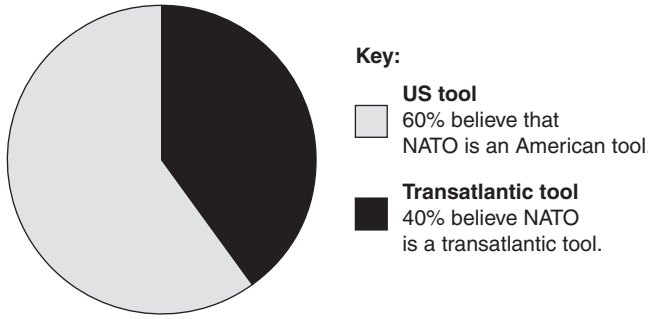

Figure 5.1 Assessment of NATO as a tool of foreign policy

The US and NATO's role before and after 9/11

The role of NATO in the Middle East since 1994 is a result of a concurrence of views among the allies in varying degrees. The North Mediterranean/South European allies, like Spain, Italy and Portugal, were the most willing and enthusiastic towards launching the process, given their interest in enhancing security cooperation with South Mediterranean countries that showed, in the short term, some understanding of the reasons and objectives of the process.

At this time, the United States neither obstructed the endeavour of South European allies nor pushed the matter forward by taking advantage of its distinctive relationships with some MD partners, particularly Egypt and Israel. Seemingly, the main American concern, at that time, was the inclusion of its close ally, Israel, and it did succeed in achieving this aim, as mentioned.

The lack of hearty support of the United States, in addition to the indifference of the Northern allies – not to mention their views on the feasibility of the whole process – were reflected in the evolution of the MD during the 1990s. Indicatively, the whole process was, as mentioned, confined to conveying respective visions with regards to regional problems, for example, the Arab–Israeli conflict, and explaining the various aspects of NATO's transformation process. There was a lack of proper financing of the whole process. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the MD process did not achieve any significant breakthrough in the first period.

In the post-9/11 years, the United States considered that NATO's role in the Middle East could be useful in supporting and reinforcing, not replacing or substituting, its bilateral cooperative channels with relevant countries. Broadly speaking, the NATO–Middle East relationship has entered a new phase. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the new NATO initiatives have been, undoubtedly, the result of a concurrence of views among the allies, serving their interests together.

The US's vision was expressed by US Representative to NATO Burns:

> The pursuit of Middle East peace and pursuit of reforms in the region are, in our view, mutually reinforcing endeavours. Both are vital for our common future and for our common security. But it is also true that the lack of full peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours cannot be used to excuse or

> delay needed reforms or to delay the beginning of a new relationship between NATO and the Arab countries.

He further insists on the necessity of building such an important role for the Alliance in the region in order to enhance regional security and stability, saying 'All of us agree that political, educational and economic reform efforts necessary for development of the Greater Middle East can only flourish in an atmosphere of regional security and stability. And in creating such an atmosphere, NATO can play a very important role'.

As for the goals that NATO is seeking to accomplish in the 'Greater Middle East', Burns mentions that NATO would help in fighting terrorism, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, improving border security and suppressing all forms of illegal trafficking, besides enhancing practical cooperation with the Middle Eastern partners and the ability to work together in the future. He further hints that NATO's role in the region is not revisable because:

> Since the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, allies agreed that NATO must be prepared to operate on the front lines of the world's crisis regions, well-beyond Europe, because that is where many of the twenty-first century challenges to world peace originate.[60]

Evidence on the effects of American 'momentum' on NATO's role in the Middle East was collected within the context of this research from US officials in charge of the whole process. For instance, Foster in interview discloses that:

> NATO's new endeavour in the region of the Broader Middle East is part of President Bush's vision of embarking upon, or encouraging, if you will, changes in this part of the world. This is a long and multifaceted process. It consists of various elements: political, economic, military, and security, etc. NATO is helping and backing up other initiatives addressing the region. Certainly, 9/11 has increased our concerns about the region.[61]

Also, Shinagel in interview explains:

> Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO started its transformation process – I mean specifically enlargement … Likewise, after 9/11, NATO has begun a new phase of its ongoing transformation, or adaptation, process to face new emerging challenges. Precisely, I mean, in this respect, the Enhanced Dialogue and ICI initiatives. From the American perspective, both processes are extremely important in enhancing the role of NATO in the Middle East region. We believe that our partnership should not be limited to the geographical factor; I mean whether or not this or that country belongs to this specific geographic area. This is our vision for the Middle East and other regions as well.[62]

Based on these clarifications, it could be emphasised that the breakthrough that has occurred in the NATO–Middle East relationship (i.e. Enhanced Dialogue and ICI) are American proposals, in origin, and have been developed, promoted and implemented due to American influence. These proposals must have been formulated to back up the new vision of the US in the region. This leaves no doubt about the accuracy of what has been deduced in the previous chapter.

The US and NATO's role in regional issues

As stated earlier, NATO's role with regards to regional issues in the Middle East only started in the post-9/11 years. This role is restricted to two main issues, which are Iraq and Darfur, and is still of a supportive nature. In other words, NATO has not been in charge of any direct military task with regards to these two issues.

Significantly, there is almost an overwhelming consensus between the interviewees that NATO's role in the Middle East should remain confined to its cooperative mechanisms, MD and ICI, i.e. limited to 'soft security' issues, bearing in mind the complexity of the region, including first and foremost the impact of US foreign policy, and in order to avoid any negative repercussions that might badly affect its current endeavours in the region.

For example, as far as the Arab–Israeli conflict is concerned, Rodkin in interview mentions that:

> I'm not sure that NATO can, in reality, play a significant role in the Arab–Israeli conflict because of a number of reasons, among which the insufficiency of resources, regional complexities, lack of invitation from the all parties, and [the nature of striking a] final peace deal, etc.

He also notes there were some circles in Israeli society that were pushing the government to insist on inviting NATO to secure the border with Lebanon in the aftermath of the 2006 war, but their pressure was not enough to convince the government to go in this direction. He concludes by saying, 'I believe that NATO's role will be limited to soft security issues, at least in the foreseeable future. I cannot foresee NATO more engaged in the Middle East [than it is]'.[63]

Likewise, Negm excludes any possibility of positive involvement of NATO in conflict resolution between Arabs and Israelis. She comments that 'The timing of this involvement is inappropriate given the Alliance's negative image in the region. Moreover, both the international and the regional context don't welcome such a role at the moment'.[64]

Aldwairi in interview explains that the political situation in the Middle East is not promising and it will not change in the few years to come. This will not put MD on hold, simply because NATO has never been a key player in Iraq or Darfur. He confirms that 'NATO cannot shoulder any role in the Israeli–Arab conflict unless invited by Israel alone. Once invited, it will operate within the framework of a plan set out by Israel alone'.[65]

Likewise, Ammor in interview says that 'I'm sure that the current situation does not help in reaching more positive cooperative relationships, simply because we have not been able to make a distinction between NATO and US foreign policy in the region'.[66]

Hardouin in interview clarifies that NATO's vision with regards to the peace process is that only in the case of reaching an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians, and if the two parties required such a supportive role for NATO, the allies would then consider the contribution that could underpin the reached agreement. 'For the time being, there is no willingness to assume any role in this complicated crisis.'

With respect to other regional issues, Hardouin in interview also confirms that there is no long-standing or well-defined vision or policy towards the Middle East region. Instead, each case is considered according to its developments as well as the interests and needs of all the allies. He further clarifies, for example, 'we have not yet decided to play any role in the Iran nuclear programme crisis … because the allies haven't seen yet any role or need for NATO in this crisis … and I can stress that if the allies decided to develop such a role, it would be certainly consistent with the will of the international community'.[67]

As for the security calculations of the Gulf area, El Saher in interview argues that NATO's role will remain restricted and limited to what is called 'soft security', like information exchange, training, etc., and 'NATO's role could support the American role in the region … but not to substitute or replace its main tasks in the complex security environment of the region. This is because of the nature of the Alliance, its composition, and the criteria for adopting decisions'.[68]

Also, Georgopoulou in interview underlines the fact that NATO was established in a particular historical juncture, and everything has changed in the current stage. In addition, she draws attention to the fact that NATO is, by nature, a military tool, while the problems of the Middle East are political and complicated. That is why its effectiveness at addressing the chronic problems of the Middle East is doubtful. 'So, I don't think that NATO could perform serious tasks in the region … But let me confirm again, we are, and shall be, committed to any policy or measure agreed by the allies.'[69]

Irrespective of these arguments, some believe that NATO is currently gathering experience about the region that will enable it to play a more important role in the future. In this context, Masala underlines that although all of NATO's activities in the wider Mediterranean region have been modest and gradual so far, it is evident that NATO has been building regional expertise and relationships that may enable it in time to play a more influential role, 'taking into account that many of the region's greatest security challenges, such as stabilising Iraq and resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, demand a more proactive approach'.[70] In line with this assessment, it could be said that NATO has adopted a wise policy of keeping its distance and limiting its role to a supportive nature, particularly in Iraq and Darfur.

Given that, it is now opportune to analyse NATO's role in these two issues. The aim of the following analysis is to reach a conclusion as to whether or

not there was some parallel between the policies of the United States and the European allies. In other words, whether or not NATO's direct involvement in these regional issues was among the tools that has been used by the United States alone to achieve its own interests in the Middle East.

NATO's role in the Iraq crisis

Arguably, the 2003 Iraq crisis was the clearest threat to the durability of the North Atlantic Alliance, in its broader context. In this context, Kaplan strongly believes that 'the Iraq issue conceivably could have been the rock on which the North Atlantic Alliance might split in two, or collapse altogether'.[71]

Without exaggeration, the future of the Alliance itself has become an area of fierce contention and doubt, especially in Europe. Conflicting views regarding the legality and necessity of the 2003 war on Iraq led to a complete division between the allies, reflected in the inability of the North Atlantic Council to reach consensus on the US request for support in the event of war. In addition, Belgium, France and Germany imposed a veto in March 2003 on the commencement of military planning to defend another member state, Turkey, in the event of hostilities with Iraq. Some European allies, specifically France and Germany, were adamant in refusing any entanglement of the Alliance in this war because of its illegality in terms of international law, according to their point of view. The opposition group deemed that, in waging an aggressive or pre-emptive war to achieve regime change in Iraq, in defiance of international legitimacy, the United States went far beyond in the scope within which a defensive alliance could be of assistance, and in fact violated the decision-making rules within NATO.[72]

Simpson explains that one outcome of the war on Iraq relates to perceptions about America's heavy-handedness, recalling:

> US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld recently threatened to pull NATO headquarters out of Brussels unless Belgium agreed to repeal a law that gives its courts universal jurisdiction to try cases of genocide, war crimes and human rights violations. While Belgian parliamentarians did agree to change the law (to cases in which either the victim or the accused were residents of Belgium), war crimes lawsuits had already been filed against US President George Bush, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, General Tommy Franks, and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld.[73]

At that time, it appeared that the rift created by the war on Iraq, as well as other unilateral policies of the neo-conservative ruling elite in Washington, could have been very serious, particularly given that two determinates were – and perhaps still are – emerging, though moving in different directions. The first was the Franco–German axis, which has been persistent about building an independent European security and defence policy, regardless of Britain and other US-friendly 'new' European countries. The second is that Washington has, undeniably, appeared prepared to ignore its alliance and allies in favour of building ad-hoc coalitions

through which it can execute its policies without the necessary consensus that hitherto characterised the performance of the 55-year-old organisation.

Despite these factors, it does seem, in essence, that the United States has succeeded in heading off the repercussions of the Iraq crisis. There are many possible reasons for this, among them its having sought international legitimacy for its occupation of Iraq, and worked successfully with some European allies to overcome what was seen as a rift in the North Atlantic Alliance. This confirms that the differences between the Alliance's two pillars did not reach the point of 'no return'. As demonstrated at the 2005 Brussels Summit,[74] as well as preceding summits, common interests and mutual benefits have surpassed existing differences, at least for the time being. Also, there is a noticeable change in US attitudes towards NATO.

Lindley indicates:

> On Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon the alliance is sometimes regarded as an anachronistic sideshow, ill-suited and under-equipped to play any meaningful role in America's grand strategic mission to bring stability and prosperity to the world through democracy … For a brief political moment, neo-conservatism threatened to replace America's internationalism with unilateralism, as Americans played with the idea that the US was indeed more powerful than the rest of the post-9/11 world. But with the challenges posed by Afghanistan and Iraq, that moment has passed, and it is once again to the mature democracies – most of which are in Europe – that the American people look instinctively for support.[75]

In line with this, the declared position, frequently repeated by high officials of both sides, as well as NATO's secretary general, was that the allies agreed to overlook their differences over Iraq and resume 'moving together'.[76] As evidence of having overcome its crisis, the Alliance, as agreed in the Istanbul Summit,[77] assisted the multinational division led by Poland to be a stabilising force in South-central Iraq, in cooperation with American and other coalition forces there. It also provided training for the new Iraqi security forces.

In brief, if the Iraq crisis demonstrates anything significant, it confirms that the United States cannot use NATO whenever it wants in achieving its objectives in the Middle East. On the contrary, it shows that the European allies, or even some of them, can prevent the use of the Alliance by the United States once they deem that this does not fit with their perceptions or interests. The post-2003 role of NATO in Iraq, instead, reflects certain rapprochement between the allies towards handling the situation in Iraq.

As for a prospective role for NATO in this crisis, Garnett comments, 'It remains to be seen how much longer the United States will be willing to shoulder this burden, and it is not altogether surprising that it is anxious to unload some of it onto NATO allies who, equally unsurprisingly, are reluctant to pick it up'.[78]

As illustrated earlier, there was an unsuccessful attempt to drag the North Atlantic Alliance into the middle of this crisis, but European allies prevented such

a move by offering only a modest and symbolic contribution. At the 2006 Riga Summit, allies reconfirmed that the Alliance's role must remain consistent with international law and showed more readiness to continue training Iraqi forces.

Paragraph 18 states that:

> All allies continue to contribute to the NATO mission in Iraq, consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546, to support the Iraqi security forces through training, in or out of the country, equipping, or contributing to trust funds. Our training mission is a demonstration of our support for the Iraqi people and their government, and for the stability, democratic development, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Iraq, in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. In response to a request from the prime minister of Iraq, we have asked NATO military authorities to develop additional niche training options to support Iraqi security forces where military expertise is required, within the mandate of the NATO training mission in Iraq. This demonstrates our continued commitment to help Iraq build effective and sustainable multi-ethnic security forces.[79]

This was the maximum that NATO could give and the minimum that the United States would accept from its European allies, taking into account the fierce differences that existed before.

NATO's role in Darfur

In contrast to the case of Iraq, the Darfur crisis has not reflected any significant differences between the European allies and the United States.

The human catastrophe in Darfur,[80] which surfaced in 2003, has attracted global concern. In short, the emergence of two anti-government rebel groups – the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement – ignited tribal fighting and looting in this poor and drought-stricken area. As a consequence, the rebellion faced a strong counter-offensive, launched by the Sudanese army and the pro-government Janjaweed militia. According to recent United Nations estimates, tens of thousands of people were killed, and about 2000 villages were burned totally or partially in a scorched-earth fighting policy.[81] These violent actions have resulted in the displacement of between one to two million people.

Human Rights Watch reports that more than two million people among Darfur's population of six million have been forcibly displaced from their homes since February 2003.[82] In September 2006, Hagan and Palloni estimated the number of those who had lost their lives to be 'no fewer than 200,000'.[83]

The Sudanese government itself was reported to be the party that launched the war of annihilation against rebel tribes to suppress their uprising – on its own accord or by proxy. Some notable human rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch[84] and Amnesty International,[85] condemned the government for its direct or indirect involvement in committing acts of ethnic cleansing. More importantly, evidence of the role of the Sudanese government in supporting, arming and

financing some tribes against other tribes was abundant, at least in the eyes of the major powers of the international community, specifically the United States and major European countries. The Sudanese government has found itself held suspect, or even condemned.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency among great powers to intervene in select humanitarian issues, even if these crises occur within the sovereign jurisdiction of certain countries – especially if the matter impinges upon their interests. Perhaps Kosovo is the clearest example in this context.

Whether Darfur's crisis is another example of this trend or not, particularly taking into consideration that this long-standing issue has only attracted attention after the discovery of new oil reserves in Sudan, and whether it was genocide – as deemed first by the former US secretary of state – or not, what deserves to be underlined is that the policies of the EU and United States have been intertwined in tackling this problem. In fact, the United States was in severe need to restore its image as the greatest world power, bearing ethical and political responsibility for preventing such terrible events at the same time as taking into account the great influence of the black vote and oil corporation lobbies in Washington.

The European Union has found an appropriate opportunity to assume its role as one of the major international players, especially in relation to human rights, a key issue of European distinctiveness. Conceivably, what encouraged the United States and the European allies to go further and exert pressure simultaneously was the mutual recognition that there could be no chance of repeating the Iraq experience in this case – i.e. confronting each other again in such a way that could jeopardise the continuity of the North Atlantic Alliance. Instead, the crisis could re-emphasise the unity of the transatlantic partners.

Not surprisingly, the rapprochement has resulted in a more decisive and effective role for the international community, via the Security Council, in successfully pressuring the parties concerned to end this catastrophe. For example, UNSC Resolution 1564,[86] of September 2004, imposed on the Sudanese government the requirement to act urgently to improve the situation. Oil sanctions would result from continued non-compliance or refusal to accept the expansion of African Union peacekeepers. The resolution also established an International Commission of Inquiry to determine whether genocide was occurring in the region.

In another development, the United States decided to abstain rather than veto a UN Security Council resolution on 31 March 2005 that referred the cases of war crimes in the region to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The American position was an attempt to strike a balance between the need to allow the international community to tackle the problem decisively and the desire to uphold the principle that non-parties to a treaty (the United States included) should not be subject to this court. This resolution, which was sponsored by France and supported by other European countries, could be considered a significant development in the evolution of the crisis so far.

In April 2005, the ICC received from the UN the names of 51 people suspected of being responsible for committing war crimes, including some high officials of the Sudanese government. In reaction, the Sudanese government confirmed that

it would never hand over the suspects; instead, it would investigate the claims under national jurisdiction. In June 2005, the ICC started its investigations into the atrocities allegedly committed.

Developments then appeared to take a wrong turn. African troops were not successful in preventing all atrocities in Darfur. As a result, the then US president called for a wider role for NATO in the region,[87] but his call did not gain the assent of those involved – neither Sudan, nor the other parties concerned. A few months later, the international community, mainly the UNSC big five and Western governments, sought to put pressure on Sudan to accept Security Council Resolution 1706, passed on 31 August 2006. This called for a 20,000 strong international force to replace African troops to help end the ordeal of hundreds of thousands in Darfur.[88] However, the Sudanese government refused the Security Council resolution and accepted only the re-enforcement of existing African troops. Sudan rejected a UN force presence on the grounds that it would lead to the fragmentation of the whole country.[89]

The situation remained fluid and was prone to further escalation. The United States lobbied because as Security Council Resolution 1706 was adopted under Chapter VII, force could be used, regardless of the acceptance or refusal of the Sudanese government. Other countries backed away from this option. Meanwhile, the mandate of African troops was extended to the end of 2006 to allow more time to resolve the dispute.[90] Finally Sudan declared, in late December 2006, its support for UN plans to join the African Union force in Darfur. This came after long regional and international negotiations to avoid more escalation and to resolve the crisis peacefully.

Importantly, the crisis in Darfur has been among the cases in which competition between the EU and NATO has come to the surface, in spite of the frequent confirmations made by officials of the two parties about the great importance given to cooperation, coordination and transparency. The competition was silent, although strong, in the face of decisions concerning which organisation should take the lead in providing logistical support for African troops assigned to intervene. Human Rights Watch criticised the EU and NATO in June 2005, saying, 'Both organisations are delaying protections for civilians in Darfur as they quarrel [over who] should take the lead in coordinating the airlift of African Union troops to the troubled Western region of Sudan'.[91]

The matter was decided in favour of the North Atlantic Alliance. On 8 June 2005, NATO declared that it had agreed to provide assistance to the African Union mission in Darfur, following a request from the African Union.

A.P. (Germany) in interview mentions:

> I know there was some contradiction or competition between the EU and NATO with regard one of the most prominent issues of the Middle East, which is Darfur. Finally, NATO took the leading role in providing logistical support for the African troops there. I consider this a defeat of the EU in front of NATO in this terrain. Also, it has shown the existing limits of the capabilities of the EU in performing out-of-area missions in comparison with the North Atlantic Alliance.[92]

The compromise reached in this regard included that both NATO and the EU would provide airlift assistance to African troops, but practically NATO would have precedence in this regard. Following this, confirmation was made by the NATO secretary general, the 'coordination of the airlift will be done from Europe. NATO and EU are doing everything to answer the request by the African Union'.[93] In July 2005, NATO began its role in Sudan by transporting Nigerian forces to the assigned area.

As for the EU, it sent some observers to view a mission run by the African Union and took the vice-presidency of the ceasefire committee. This limited role for the EU was, in fact, the tip of the iceberg of political efforts being exerted to resolve the problem at this point. Diplomatically, the EU sought to widen its role by paying sufficient attention to the necessity of avoiding a public clash with NATO. This was symptomatic of the EU's keenness not to allow NATO to monopolise the region, especially when the main issue was a humanitarian one. For the sake of political expediency, the two parties succeeded in bridging their differences. This does not, however, guarantee that they will be able to do it again with regards to future sensitive issues, particularly when their interests are at stake.

Hardouin in interview indicates:

> With regard to Darfur, our role has been clear. We have decided to back up and support the international community in its efforts to stop the humanitarian crisis there. We did provide the African peace force with the required logistical assistance. Everyone has noticed that the role of NATO in this crisis has been based on international legitimacy, as developed and dictated by the competent authority that is the Security Council.[94]

The allies, at the 2006 Riga Summit, conveyed the message that they would remain committed to working towards ending the crisis. In Paragraph 19, they said:

> We are deeply concerned by the continued fighting in Darfur as well as the worsening humanitarian situation and call on all parties to abide by the ceasefire. We are concerned about the regional implications of the conflict. We welcome the conclusions of the 16 November 2006 meeting in Addis Ababa for an African Union (AU)/UN hybrid peacekeeping mission and urge the Government of Sudan to implement them. NATO continues to support the ongoing AU mission and is ready, following consultation with and the agreement of the AU, to broaden that support. The Alliance is committed to continued coordination with all actors involved, in particular the AU, the UN and the EU, including with respect to possible support for a follow-on mission with airlifts and training.[95]

In sum, NATO's role in supporting the African troops that are seeking to keep the peace in Darfur has come as a consequence of a degree of convergence of views

between the United States and its European allies. Once again, it could not be claimed that NATO's role in Darfur is a response to American pressure or views. Rather, it is the fruitful amalgamation of views between the two pillars of NATO.

The competition between the EU and NATO in this respect should not hide the fact that international intervention was approved by the United States and its European allies. Irrespective of this, the United States conveyed a lesson to whoever is concerned that the US-led organisation is not to be put in a competitive situation with any European institution. Inarguably, the United States was adamant in preserving the precedence of NATO, according to the 'Berlin Plus formula' mentioned before, with regards to any proposed task in the region, and not to allow any exclusive European entity to enlarge its role at the expense of the new NATO endeavour.

Overall, NATO has a foothold in the Middle East and has proven its readiness, in one way or another, to perform other tasks, including humanitarian missions. This has provided a precedent that might be repeatable in the region in the coming years.

Conclusion

Despite the prevailing conviction that NATO's role in the Middle East – i.e. its cooperative initiatives as well as its involvement in regional issues – could be considered a mere tool of US foreign policy, the previous analytical review has proven that for there to be a role, there must be concurrence between the policies of the two pillars of the North Atlantic Alliance, the US and its European allies. Suffice it to refer to the fact that some of the European allies, not all of them, prevented the United States from using NATO in launching the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

On the other hand, when the will of the United States ran in parallel with the orientation of its European allies, the role of NATO was successful, as in the Darfur crisis. The limits of NATO's role in both crises reflect the degree of consistency of the positions of the two pillars of the Alliance, the United States and Europe. Until now, there is neither a clear nor unified vision about the role of NATO with regards to hard security issues in the Middle East region. Each case is decided according to its own merits and circumstances. Despite the fact that recent years have witnessed an increasing role for NATO regarding some issues, it is far from clear whether or not NATO would be able to help in solving other complicated issues, like the Arab–Israeli conflict.

Currently, it is obvious that there is a certain level of harmony between the United States and its European NATO allies towards the region that suggests that the coming years will witness a growing role for the North Atlantic Alliance in the Middle East region. This harmony does not mean or guarantee full consistency between the allies.

Conclusion

NATO and security challenges in the Middle East

This book has sought to explore the various determinates of the growing relationship between the North Atlantic Alliance and the Middle East region, especially in the aftermath of the events of 9/11. The aim of this research was to examine the impacts of those events on NATO's policy towards the region, as well as whether or not NATO has become a tool of US policy in the region. In doing so, NATO's evolving policy in the Middle East has been examined thoroughly in its two consecutive stages, from 1994 when it was launched to 9/11, and from 9/11 to the 2006 Riga Summit that launched new proposals with regards to the Middle East region.

Broadly speaking, the research has proven that 9/11 was a defining turning point in the evolution of NATO's role in the Middle Eastern security arena. The repercussions of 9/11 have changed and developed NATO's role from a limited pattern of cooperative security dialogue to a more effective formula that might lead eventually to some form of real partnership. Not only this, but also the scope of NATO's activities in the region was extended to address the most dangerous threats to the Euro-Atlantic allies, which are terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Over and above, NATO, which never played any role with respect to major regional issues before 9/11, has now got a foothold, if limited, in the Middle East. As indicated in the previous chapter, NATO has been playing a supportive role in international efforts in Darfur and Iraq, which have been the two most important and pressing Middle Eastern security issues in recent years.

This research also reached the conclusion that NATO has been used by the United States to serve its own policy in the region, but only to the extent that was acceptable to other European allies. This confirms that NATO's Middle Eastern policy was, and still is, a reflection of transatlantic interests. Doubtless, US momentum in the post-9/11 years is the most effective and influential factor in the history of NATO's developing role in the Middle East. Positively and/or negatively, the role of the North Atlantic Alliance in the Middle East has been subject to external factors impinging upon the region, in particular developments in US foreign policy.

The logic lying behind NATO's new role in the Middle East region is the fact that the region is extremely important from the perspective of the stability and prosperity of the world economy, given it possesses the largest reserves of crude

oil and natural gas worldwide. Added to this, there are innumerable dynamic, incessant and intertwined interests between Middle Eastern countries and NATO allies, including distinctive political and economic ties and the impact of geographical proximity. Therefore, there is no doubt that interdependence and mutual influence between the Middle East region and the Euro-Atlantic region is of the utmost importance for both parties.

Explicitly, NATO has frequently stated that the reason for this evolving relationship is the perception – if not the conviction or belief – that the region is the main source of intolerable international dangers, such as terrorism, the existence of weapons of mass destruction and the availability of their technology and means of delivery, illegal migrants and international organised crime. The Alliance deems that while there are some standing challenges that need to be addressed urgently, and cautiously, there are also many common interests that dictate that the two parties should cooperate in good faith for their common benefit.

Reciprocally, there is also a belief in the Middle East, or at least among its key countries, that cooperation with the Alliance is not only unavoidable but could be mutually beneficial. This does not rule out the likelihood of the two parties bearing fears or suspicions towards each other. Indeed, despite the continued development of their current relationship, the two parties have not agreed upon the outlines of their relationship in the future. Noticeably, there is still a recognisable level of uncertainty in this respect, as neither party has yet developed its own vision. For instance, the United States, the most important player in this process in the post-9/11 years, appears to be still considering the future of the relationship between NATO and its Middle Eastern partners.

Shinagel in interview says that the United States is not willing to impose a particular vision of the future relationship between NATO and Middle Eastern partners. Instead, it has left the matter to the will and desire of each country to decide to what extent it would develop its relationship with NATO. Shinagel clarifies that current US policy is focused on increasing the potential outcome of cooperative links on the basis of the principle of mutual benefits and co-ownership, and that 'this could be achieved by increasing NATO's ability to provide various opportunities of practical cooperation, as well as enhancing, in parallel, political consultations with all partners regarding our mutual concerns'.[1]

Rooke in interview assesses that any new form of 'genuine' partnership – or a major breakthrough in the current relationship between NATO and the Middle Eastern partners – is not to be expected in less than 10 years, because 'we are for taking incremental steps, and we still do not have clear and well-defined goals for the future of the role of the Alliance in the Middle East region'.[2]

Likewise, NATO seems, at the current stage, satisfied with recent developments and is not seeking to take more significant steps in this evolving relationship on the belief that the best that could be done is to enhance 'cultural security'. Erdmann in interview explains that 'the new NATO is "NATO attached to its partners in various levels", and we shall continue our effort to consolidate this ongoing process'.[3]

In all cases, mention must be made that there is growing recognition between the United States and its European allies of the necessity of not repeating the Iraq scenario that hampered, if not seriously threatened, the amalgamation of their policies towards the Middle East. Bin in interview excludes the possibility that US–European differences towards Middle Eastern issues could prevent or delay the prospective role of the Alliance in the region, because both pillars of NATO have come to realise that they are in need of each other in addressing Middle Eastern challenges, saying 'Iraq has become a lesson-learning process that proves that no one can do everything alone. Moreover, the Europeans realised that they are in need of the United States to stabilise the region. That is why the Iraq case will not be repeatable'.[4]

Before presenting the main findings of this research, two points have to be underlined: first, whereas the various parts of this research were best enlightened and understood in accordance with the core concepts of liberal institutionalism,[5] the theory could not help in explaining some aspects that are related to the new global role of the North Atlantic Alliance; and second, valuable information was obtained from officials of the two sides. Indeed, much assistance was afforded from the parties concerned. This assistance – and the method of direct interviewing – was important given that available literature does not cover all the major questions of this research.

To elaborate on the first point, the ongoing transformation process, which was reviewed and analysed in Chapter 2, has run, for the most part, in conformity with the basic concepts of the theory of liberal institutionalism, especially with respect to the enlargement and Partnership for Peace mechanisms. Nonetheless, the transformation process itself has witnessed a gradual deviation from the basic principles of international law, particularly in cases where NATO has to anticipate imminent hostilities (for example, the evolution of a NATO response force that might act in 'out of area' operations to tackle terrorist actions or the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and will only be answerable to the NATO Council, not the UN Security Council). The contradiction with liberal institutionalism is evident as this theory, in general, emphasises the role of international legitimacy and the importance of developing advanced rules for governing state behaviour and international cooperation. Thus, it could be argued that some traces of realism, which deems that unilateral interests in the context of international anarchy always prevail in the international arena, could be found in the new criteria governing the global role of NATO. Broadly speaking, there is still a certain degree of confusion about the criteria governing NATO's new global role, and this reflects differences between its major allies regarding the limits of this role. It is arguable that US post-9/11 policies have weakened the relevance of liberal institutionalism. For example, Nuruzzaman confirms that 'the dominance of the neoconservative agenda signifies an erosion of liberal institutionalist logic. Unilateralism, militarism, and the use of force to universalise American style democracy are significant issues that sound uncomfortable to liberal institutionalists'.[6] This argument highlights that post-9/11 realities – i.e. terrorism and the availability of weapons of mass destruction – that pushed the United States to

apply harsh policies, particularly in the Middle East region, have undermined the relevance of liberal institutionalism.

Yet this argument is not wholly borne out by this study. Indeed, US policies have not impacted negatively on NATO's role in the Middle East. Further, NATO's role with regards to pressing Middle Eastern security issues, particularly Iraq and Darfur, has so far been fully consistent with international legitimacy. NATO's contributions, for example, training the new Iraqi security forces and providing logistical support to African troops in Darfur, are of a positive nature and have helped in improving, to a certain extent, the security environment in the region. Liberal institutionalist theory emphasises the beneficial aspects of security cooperation, based on goodwill and trust in human nature, even when legitimate force is used to achieve or restore peace.

The case that did reflect severe differences between the allies was that of US actions in Iraq. Indeed, NATO's role was crippled in the first phase of the 2003 war.[7] Other than this, differences between the allies with respect to the degree of due adherence to international law did not impinge upon the overall role of NATO in the region. This confirms that the role of NATO, broadly reflected in certain degrees of rapprochement between the United States and its European allies, could be understood and explained within the chosen theoretical framework. Forthrightly, American policies did not undermine the applicability of liberal institutionalist theory in this context.

With regards to the second point noted above, this research is the first that presents the views of Middle Eastern officials on various aspects of the NATO–Middle East relationship, showing to what extent these views differ from or resemble those of NATO officials. The author is fully satisfied that the list of interviewees, as set out in the introduction, included the desk officers of the partners concerned, besides NATO's officials, as well as some academic experts who did follow or participate in the process since its inception. The valuable information obtained from these intensive interviews did guide the author in conducting the consecutive parts of this research. Also, the outcome of these interviews did provide the author with some insights about the perceptions and/or misperceptions of the two parties. As such, the study could help in guiding the two parties to manage differences between each other and take into account the concerns of one another. It also paves the way for further research in this area.

In addition to primary interviews, this research took advantage of examining a large body of NATO documents from the end of the Cold War forwards. The research traced the development of NATO's Middle Eastern policy from its preliminary stages and evaluated the tremendous impact of the transformation process. A qualitative analysis approach was used in examining a large number of statements and declarations, which was proven adequate bearing in mind the inherent difficulties of gaining detailed information on security related matters, including evolving forms of cooperation and military-to-military activities.

Nonetheless, some gaps remain, related to the difficulty of gaining information from either side (from NATO's side or the Middle Eastern partners). For example, detailed answers to practical questions, including which area of cooperation

was favoured by this or that country and/or how frequently did the given country participate with others in this specific activity, often were not available. Similarly, the research was not able to answer the question as to why Oman and Saudi Arabia have not yet joined the ICI, as was the case of other Gulf countries, as meetings with high-ranking officials of the two countries were not possible. The frequent answer given by NATO officials was that the two countries are still considering the expected benefits of joining the ICI. This response is insufficient, bearing in mind the distinctive relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Overall, the lack of available information on these matters did not prevent the major points of interest of this research being answered. This was achieved by having selected the two case studies to examine, in detail, the two hypotheses of this research. The selection of these two case studies (Egypt as a sample of MD and Kuwait as a sample of ICI) was the most appropriate due to the fact that Egypt has always enjoyed a leading role in the region among the Arab countries; thus there was a need to evaluate the positive as well as negative aspects of its relationship with NATO to assess the evolution of the whole MD process. Likewise, Kuwait was the first Gulf country to join the ICI. It took more advanced steps in developing this relationship than all other Gulf partners. Justifiably, its current relationship with NATO presents the example to be followed by other ICI countries in the coming period. Also important is the fact that information was available with respect to these two case studies. Factually, the support and assistance offered by the officials of these two countries was indispensable, and incomparable to other cases, bearing in mind the lack of available literature on this subject.

Summary and final thoughts

The main findings of this research can be summarised as follows:

1 Empirical work conducted within the context of this research leaves no doubt about the accuracy of choosing 'liberal Institutionalism' as the most appropriate theoretical framework for understanding NATO's developing Middle East role. The outcome of interviews and examining the large amount of raw material confirm the utility of this theoretical framework, as it has been proven that NATO's role in the Middle East, in its two consecutive stages, has evolved in harmony with the basic concepts of this theory.

   As illustrated in the preceding chapters, the main concepts of liberal institutionalist theory include: trust in human nature and the unity of humankind; that relationships between states can be cooperative, even in the security field; cooperation can improve mutual security without the existence of a hegemonic power based on conviction that security is not a zero-sum game; emphasising the importance of individual perceptions and the power of ideas in improving international interactions and changing state preferences in such a way to serve world peace and stability; that institutions foster and enhance interstate cooperation; and that providing concerned partners

with accurate and necessary information is vital to avoid miscalculations that might threaten cooperation and peace. In all aspects, the development of NATO's Middle East role has exhibited the efficacy of these principles.

To elaborate, the North Atlantic Alliance launched its role in the Middle East in 1994 to enhance potential cooperation with Middle Eastern partners with a view to contributing towards improving the fragile security environment in this troubled area. This development, in its first phase from 1994 to 9/11, illustrates fully the principles of liberal institutionalism in practice. The dialogue conducted between NATO and some Mediterranean countries was designed to be a vehicle towards realising new objectives, such as the dissemination of information, the exchange of ideas, dispelling misperceptions and attempts to build common definitions about certain security issues. Since its inception, the process gave high importance to the impact of individuals as well as their ability to interact in a new environment. Indeed, these new activities largely echoed the basic concepts of liberal institutionalist theory: trust in human nature; and that individuals are rational and can, consequently, recognise their best interests and pursue them in a logical manner.

2 Furthermore, it is evident that the first stage of the process was initiated, developed and based on the conviction of the unity of humankind, and that cooperation is possible in security matters, even in a region long entangled in wars and perpetual crises. To make it clearer, the process is aimed at developing a common understanding about mutual security threats, despite the surrounding regional complications. Certainly, this ran in parallel with the core concept of the chosen theory which confirms that cooperation always remains an option, and that cooperation, if limited, can lead to more cooperation, and this will eventually improve the whole security situation for every country. NATO, as an institution, has helped in bringing adversaries who never established diplomatic relationships among themselves (i.e. some Arab countries and Israel) to sit around the same table to discuss various security issues. This is an achievement that should not be downplayed.

3 In the second phase, from 9/11 to 2006, NATO has continued to enhance its role in conformity with the principles of liberal institutionalism. For example, instead of holding only three-to-four short meetings/rounds of consultations between the concerned parties each year, NATO has adopted new training initiatives for officials from different parties. These comprehensive training courses are being held alongside an increasing number of seminars, workshops and frequent meetings on different levels in various NATO schools as well as at the NATO Defence College in Rome. The main objective is to allow technical staff and political and military officers to get acquainted with the core concepts of the process – i.e. trans-Mediterranean coordination and the necessity of regional cooperation with regards to many issues of mutual concern, for example terrorism and border security.

Additionally, new proposals are being presented with regards to the establishment of a regional centre for cooperation in one of the Middle Eastern capitals, besides allocating enough resources to establish a specialised faculty

for Middle Eastern studies in Rome that will invite students from the two parties to participate in intensive courses and engage in common research about how best to serve mutual interests and security needs. Furthermore, NATO has elevated the yearly meetings with its Middle Eastern partners to the ministerial level and other higher and/or equivalent military ranks in order to boost cooperation potential and to facilitate the flow of information to the highest levels of decision making in concerned countries.

In support of this end, NATO has also exerted increased effort to inform the intelligentsia (particularly academic circles, parliamentarians and the mass media) about its orientation towards the region in order to end – or at least weaken – hostile popular attitudes towards it and its policies. In this respect, NATO has drawn on liberal institutionalist concepts, including a focus on the power of ideas and the impact of individuals, in order to enhance its ability to contribute positively to improving the security environment in the Middle East. Being an alliance of democratic countries, NATO has sought to capitalise on the reassurance some regional partners have felt comfortable stemming from the perception that democratic governments are not as able to embark on dramatic shifts in their policies, particularly adopting a new hostile posture towards the region.

4 As has already been noted, this theory provides the most convincing framework for understanding as well as justifying the reasons and incentives of the process, mentioned above, particularly those aspects that underpin the utmost importance of cooperation and dissemination of accurate information as well as the impacts of individuals and power of ideas on security matters. Certainly, no other theory can fit in this context. As illustrated in various parts of this research, key alliance members never used NATO's role in its two consecutive stages to impose on or dictate anything to Middle Eastern partners. This was confirmed by officials interviewed and in the two case studies examined (NATO–Egypt and NATO–Kuwait relationships). The tense atmosphere that prevailed in the region due to the events of 9/11 and subsequent US policies did not, factually, change the nature of the cooperative relationship between the two sets of parties. Neither was this unfolding relationship between NATO and its Middle Eastern partners compromised by the issues of democratisation and/or reform that have become issues of a global concern and contention in the years following 9/11.

As stated in Chapter 1, contention over the necessity and applicability of democracy in the region was reduced when the 2004 G8 Summit launched its own initiative to alleviate poverty and pursue regional democratisation and reform while preserving a level of stability necessary for world security. NATO did try to help in this international endeavour. For instance, notions like 'reform' and 'democratisation' have started to creep into NATO's training courses and other forums of political consultation. The objective was to encourage internal debate among participants about these issues and their impact on security. Nonetheless, once the Alliance noticed the negative reactions of some of its Middle Eastern partners towards the introduction

of related concepts like 'transparency' and defence reform, it decided not to move faster than necessary in this direction.

Neither realism nor constructivism fit as explanatory frameworks in this context, either before or after the events of 9/11. Likewise, other theories that were refuted in the introduction remain irrelevant because the backbone of the process – i.e. soft security issues – was maintained and enhanced, nothing more. For all these reasons, it can be confirmed that liberal institutionalism has proven the most adequate theoretical framework of understanding, informing the research since its inception by providing adequate explanation of NATO's dialogue process, its incentives and evolution.

5 In comparing the pattern and scope of the NATO–Middle East relationship before and after 9/11, it can be confirmed that serious steps were taken – although gradually – to enlarge and activate the role of NATO in the Middle East. There is an almost overwhelming consensus among officials and experts interviewed that 9/11 was a turning point. Documents examined with regards to the two case studies of the research confirm the accuracy of this assessment. Before 9/11, NATO sought to achieve certain limited yet important aims, like dispelling misperceptions, increasing confidence and enhancing interoperability with Mediterranean partners. Not all these objectives were completely met. Some reluctance and lack of trust between NATO and some Middle Eastern partners persisted even in the second phase of NATO's role in the region. This was clearly illustrated in the first case study (the NATO–Egypt relationship).

This state of affairs could be ascribed to a number of internal and external factors. Internal factors include: the absence of a well-defined political agenda; the absence of a guiding political declaration; the different, sometimes contradicting, positions of MD partners themselves with regards to their relationship with the Alliance; the lack of an effective follow-up mechanism; and a lack of enthusiasm on both sides, in varying degrees, with regards to the evolution of the process. As far as external factors are concerned, these include primarily the repercussions and developments of the Arab–Israeli conflict that has hampered enhancing regional security cooperation.

Put bluntly, the NATO process was often perceived as a way of normalising the relationship between Arabs and Israelis 'for free' before achieving durable peace in the region. Therefore, some countries, while having accepted to join the process for various reasons, were adamant that the NATO process would remain slow and not develop more than necessary, according to their national calculations, in order to avoid provoking public anger.

Not only this, but also the process was influenced by the long legacy of colonialism in the region as well as the nature of some US policies in recent years, particularly towards Palestine and Iraq, that have rendered achieving NATO's objectives difficult, bearing in mind the widespread perception in the region that NATO equals the United States and that subsequently any NATO policy must be a vanguard of the interventionist policy of the United States.

In all cases, it can be confirmed that the MD process from its inception in 1994 until 2001 was a limited security dialogue that served as a mechanism of exchanging information, conveying expertise and promoting the ideas and concepts of trans-Mediterranean cooperation. The whole process, emerging as it did in an unfavourable environment, was considered by some allies as a way of increasing influence in the region, though tangible results could not be realised at this time.

6 In its post-9/11 role, NATO launched new initiatives in an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of its performance in the preceding years. These initiatives – the Enhanced Dialogue and ICI – came as a result of new thinking towards the region that emerged as a consequence of the impact of the events of 9/11. Evidence collected within the context of this research confirms that these proposals were, in nature, American proposals. They were presented, promoted and implemented as an integral part of former US President Bush's vision with regards to the whole region of the Broader Middle East.

Research has shown that US momentum and/or influence on the two parts of the existing NATO–Middle East relationship was the primary, if not the only, reason behind turning the limited existing relationship into a more serious one designed to boost mutual efforts towards combating perceived threats, principally terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, alongside other security concerns. A US vision for a new Middle East was also presented via other US and G8 initiatives that were examined in Chapter 1. In parallel, the new NATO endeavour was aimed at complementing these efforts by covering security aspects not otherwise handled.

The overall objective behind NATO's enhanced initiatives is to allow NATO to get more involved in Middle Eastern affairs, to increase its awareness about and – consequently – preparation for various security threats emanating from the region. In practical terms, the Enhanced MD and ICI aim at paving the way towards establishing some form of genuine security 'partnership' in the region in the future. Still, it is as yet premature to suggest when this might materialise, or how it would evolve, bearing in mind the known challenges attendant to, and possible unexpected developments within, complicated regional crises.

7 Despite huge internal and external difficulties, NATO's engagement in Middle Eastern affairs has resulted in some positive results. Arguably, NATO has contributed in achieving a 'relative' enhancement of regional security. This relative enhancement of regional security has been realised through two main vehicles: first, ongoing practical cooperation through which NATO has been conveying part of its considerable expertise to MD and ICI partners in many fields, such as combating terrorism, civil emergency preparation, border security, environmental safety, search and rescue, combating illegal trafficking and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This is a significant – perhaps indispensable for some countries – contribution as it helps concerned countries to modernise, equip and prepare their militaries, alongside other competent authorities, to handle – either individually or in

cooperation with NATO or other parties – various security contingences. All officials and experts interviewed within the context of this research confirm that this practical cooperation is the most tangible feature of the NATO process and has, by far, surpassed the utility of political dialogue.

The other vehicle through which NATO has helped in improving, albeit in a limited way, regional security is its recent roles in Darfur and Iraq. The supportive role NATO is performing in Darfur is strengthening and backing up efforts exerted by the United Nations to put an end to grave human rights atrocities there. NATO is also assuming the duty of training Iraq's new security forces in order to enable local authorities to work towards restoring order and security in Iraq. This contribution is important because it symbolises and indicates that NATO can help in improving the capabilities of local authorities elsewhere in the future.

Put another way, NATO's Iraq role hints that the Alliance can play a supportive role with regards to 'internal' security as well. Yet, important as it is, one should underline that fact that NATO's role in the region has not improved the overall regional security environment in the turbulent Middle East region to any great extent. This remains a goal far beyond NATO's jurisdiction and subject to other regional and international interactions.

From another perspective, despite prevailing suspicion in the region over the new NATO endeavour, nothing in the concurrent two processes, the Enhanced MD and ICI, indicates that NATO's role in the region has produced – or led to – any unfavourable results in terms of regional security, or that these parallel tracks could enable NATO to apply an interventionist policy, at least until now.

8 The analytical work has revealed that while NATO has been used by the United States to serve its own interests, this only happened to an extent acceptable to European allies. More precisely, NATO is a transatlantic tool, not a mere American one that could be utilised whenever and wherever Washington wants, with or without the consent of other allies. This conclusion was deduced after having examined NATO's new role with regards to regional crises in the Middle East, specifically Iraq and Darfur.

It is sufficient to illustrate that some European allies, mainly France, Germany and Belgium, succeeded in preventing the United States from using NATO in either launching the war against Iraq in 2003, or providing assistance to Turkey, which is an ally, in the case of hostilities. Those allies rejected any entanglement of NATO in the Iraq war because they viewed it an illegal war; that the United States went far beyond the scope within which a defensive alliance could be of assistance. As such, the United States had to establish an ad-hoc coalition of supporting countries, among them some NATO allies such as Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom, to 'internationalise' its war on Iraq. Meanwhile, NATO's flag was never raised in the Iraq war.

After 2003, the level of support NATO afforded – i.e. assisting the multinational division led by Poland to be a stabilising force in South-central Iraq, as well as providing training for new Iraqi security forces – reflected the degree of rapprochement between the allies' positions that was achieved in

subsequent summits, especially the 2004 Istanbul Summit. It was a fruitful result of political compromise through which the allies agreed to overlook differences of opinion with regards to the crisis.

Likewise, the level of NATO's engagement in Darfur only reflected the level of consent of all allies towards how best NATO could support the efforts exerted by the international community to stop massacres and atrocities there. In 2005, the United States called for a wider NATO role in the area, but European allies were largely of the view that NATO's role should remain supportive in nature – i.e. providing African forces assigned to maintain order in Darfur with the necessary logistical support, including airlift operations. It is true that the EU and NATO were competing over which body should take precedence in this crisis, but the matter was decided in favour of NATO due to huge American influence.

Again, this confirms that any NATO move must be taken in the light of the collective will of the United States and its European allies together. No group can impose its policy on NATO without securing the consent of others, and NATO, as an institution, remains an expression of consensus between the allies. This does not contradict the fact that in most cases, particularly those that do not require military action, the United States can press its visions. This is understandable taking into account the huge influence of the US within NATO as an institution, and also on European allies, particularly the so-called 'new European states' (i.e. Poland, Hungary, etc.) that joined NATO within the context of its enlargement process, reviewed in Chapter 2. Bluntly, the factor of political expediency frequently requires European allies to give precedence to the benefits of their bilateral relationships with the United States and not to obstruct its policies within NATO.

9 Similarly, in comparing US positions towards the two consecutive stages of NATO's role in the Middle East, one can recognise that the advancement of this role has only taken place after the United States decided to change its stance and use its influence to boost and reinforce this role. In this respect, it is worth underlining that a lack of US support in the pre-9/11 stage of NATO's endeavour in the region was evident. The US was only keen that its closest ally, Israel, would not be excluded from the process that was initiated by some Southern European allies. However, after 9/11, the US has come to recognise the importance of NATO's engagement in the region. Consequently, more blood was pumped into the veins of the process.

Doubtless, NATO's new initiatives are serving the interests of all the allies. It could not be claimed that 'US-oriented initiatives' are only supporting the objectives of US foreign policy. On the contrary, there is a noticeably high degree of coincidence between the security objectives of the United States and its European allies. This coincidence has increased as a result of 9/11, as well as after the recent terrorist attacks in Europe. This is illustrated by comparing the threats and sources of dangers recognised by the latest documents of NATO, such as those that resulted from the summits in Prague 2002, Istanbul 2004, Riga 2006, with the 2006 national security strategy of the United States

and the 2003 Solana Paper on European security. All these policy-making documents state that the major security concerns are terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, failed states and their ramifications on world security, among others, like transnational crime and illegal trafficking.

Therefore, even if NATO's post-9/11 role is more 'American' oriented, and was formulated and implemented to serve the US vision with regards to the 'Broader Middle East', this should not hide or weaken the fact that it has developed with the approval of European allies and is still serving their overall interests as well. Perhaps justifiably, NATO does serve the interests of the US more than other European allies, due the fact that the US has more interests in the region than any ally or even group of allies.

On the other hand, as has been revealed in the two case studies, NATO's relationships with Egypt and Kuwait, US influence was the most decisive and convincing factor that led Middle Eastern partners to accept to cooperate with – or at least not to obstruct – NATO's new proposals. Taken altogether, Middle Eastern partners, both Mediterranean and Gulf countries, have responded positively, in varying degrees, to the new orientation of NATO in the post-9/11 years, reflecting their understanding and appreciation of the reasons behind enhancing NATO's role in the region.

Put differently, these countries have come to recognise that important interests with the United States would be at stake if they did not accept to foster better cooperation with NATO in its new endeavour in the region.

10 The main objective behind the new NATO endeavour in the region is to better prepare itself to contain, deter and/or prevent the spill over of Middle Eastern dangers from reaching Euro-Atlantic shores. These Middle Eastern dangers were mainly identified to be terrorism and weapons of mass destruction as well as other less important threats mentioned above. Regarding terrorism, serious steps were taken to combat it. NATO has increased the pace of its consultations with Middle Eastern partners in this respect. Despite some reluctance from Arab partners at the beginning (mainly because of the inherent difficulty of proposing an agreed upon definition of terrorism and the need to differentiate it from people's legal right to resist foreign occupation), NATO has progressed successfully in the direction.

Most significantly, NATO has signed conventions for the protection of the secrecy of information with most of its partners in order to facilitate intelligence sharing on standing threats in the region. Also, NATO has launched operation 'Active Endeavour' that is mandated to inspect ships in the Mediterranean Sea in order to cut off links between terrorist cells existing on the two flanks of the Mediterranean. Israel has joined the operation, while Algeria and Morocco are still finalising the modalities of their participation in an operation that is running without international authorisation. As for Egypt, it agreed to cooperate with the operation on a case-by-case basis due to sensitivity of its regional position. Other MD partners lack the necessary resources to join the operation.

Other than consultation, Active Endeavour and some training courses, one cannot recognise a fully-fledged NATO strategy for combating terrorism in the Middle East. Many interviewees for this research believe that NATO's role in combating terrorism is and will remain supportive, in part because NATO as a military alliance is not well-equipped to combat terrorist cells and networks and in part because of divergent views and considerations. At the current stage, NATO can do nothing other than support existing international efforts to combat terrorism.

11 With respect to weapons of mass destruction, which have become an issue of global concern, particularly post-9/11, NATO has largely failed to achieve concrete results. Whereas Israel was the only MD partner that accepted holding a round of consultations with NATO about its policy towards the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Arab partners have persistently rejected NATO's requests to do the same. Perhaps justifiably, Arab countries do not see NATO as an honest broker in this respect, taking into account the unbalanced position of NATO that states that chemical and biological weapons should be looked at as a priority because they were frequently used in wars and against peoples, while nuclear weapons, that Israel never admits it possesses, were only used one time in history.

Wisely enough, NATO so far refrains from urging Arab partners to change their position in order to avoid any negative repercussions on other cooperative channels or the ongoing political dialogue. At the moment, NATO confines itself in this tricky area to reiterating, in successive summits, its full support for other international mechanisms for non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, especially the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. One cannot expect any convergence in handling this issue in the foreseeable future. Only when Arabs and Israelis conclude a comprehensive peace treaty could matters change significantly in this domain.

12 Broadly speaking, NATO, while pursuing its cooperative posture with its Middle Eastern partners, does not completely exclude the possibility of resorting to its main task – deterrence – if its strategic interests are put at stake. The package of 'interests' of NATO encompasses not only the above-mentioned dangers, like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and the availability of their technology, but also the disruption of the flow of crude oil and natural gas as well as safe shipping in international waters. One can surmise, however, that the Alliance would only intervene directly and forcibly if dangers become overwhelming or imminent. This remains a remote possibility because there is no reason to expect that any Middle Eastern country would dare threaten the interests of the Alliance, for instance by halting the outward supply of oil and natural gas. Also, nothing indicates that long-standing regimes in the region will collapse or be replaced by extremist or fundamentalist regimes in the foreseeable future, especially those of strategic importance, like the Egyptian and Algerian regimes.

13 This research has revealed that there is no unified vision between the allies regarding the prospect of NATO's role in the Middle East. The United States,

backed by some allies, like the United Kingdom, wants serious involvement and/or positive engagement in unresolved Middle Eastern issues like Iraq, Darfur and South Lebanon. But some European allies, particularly France and Germany, do not support this endeavour. As shown by empirical research, some European allies did not favour this engagement since its inception; others, particularly Southern European allies, argued for handling cooperative security activities within and through European intergovernmental institutions. At the end of the day, all the allies were obliged to respond positively to was – or at least not oppose or abort – the new US orientation post-9/11 towards the enlargement of NATO's role in the Middle East region.

Not only this, but also the allies themselves do not hold a clear, agreed, or well established definition for what is meant exactly by 'the region of the Middle East'; consequently, every case is decided according to its own merits; whether it is Middle Eastern or not. Perhaps because of these significant differences among allies, NATO is not able to perform, at the current stage, any hard security mission that could contribute positively towards solving the long-standing crises in the region, other than its auxiliary and limited role in Darfur and Iraq. For instance, NATO does not have a policy towards the crisis over Western Sahara between Algeria and Morocco that has been hindering normal relations between the two MD countries. Nor does NATO have a vision regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, despite that it has become an issue of global concern in recent years.[8]

In parallel, there is overwhelming consensus between interviewees that NATO should not get involved in the unresolved crises of the Middle East, for instance the Arab–Israeli conflict, in order to avoid any negative repercussions on its cooperative mechanisms, i.e. MD and ICI, which are envisaged to be vehicles towards attaining a more serious and fruitful relationship in the future. In this respect, there is almost full consensus between the allies about the beneficial aspects of these cooperative mechanisms, as laid down by successive summits, particularly post-9/11. Thus, it could be confirmed that whereas there are differences among allies about the necessity and feasibility of NATO's role with respect to 'hard security issues', there is certainty about the need to foster 'soft security cooperation' with Middle Eastern partners.

14 As illustrated in Chapter 2, NATO's transformation process is ongoing, having started with the end of the Cold War, and has laid down the foundation of a new global role for NATO by revising its doctrine, structure and policies, transforming it from a traditional defensive alliance into a new 'security, political and military alliance' mandated to handle a wide spectrum of security threats worldwide. In doing so, NATO has become a global organisation – in the words of NATO policymakers,[9] a 'global security provider' – seeking to establish ties and patterns of cooperation with select countries in areas of strategic importance. The Middle East has been, certainly, one of NATO's main priorities in the immediate post-Cold War years and has, after 9/11, become a top priority since. NATO's Middle Eastern policy until now is based on the concepts of cooperation, dialogue and deterrence.

15 Finally, NATO and its Middle Eastern partners have not yet developed a complete or definitive vision for their relationship in the future. This was revealed clearly in the interview-based research conducted. On the one hand, this may suggest that we will witness the continuation of NATO's role in the region within the agreed scope, i.e. cooperative mechanisms and a supportive role towards select regional problems, if necessary. On the other hand, the final outcome will, mainly, rely on wise management of this evolving relationship and the ability of the two sets of parties to keep the relationship clear of regional complications. At this stage, it is worth underlining that the historical experience of the region's dealings with Western initiatives might indicate that some countries will, in all likelihood, rush before others to take more advanced steps in the direction of tangible results. This will automatically lead other countries to soften their positions and policies. Based on this, it could be expected that the coming years will witness various levels of relationship between the Alliance and Middle Eastern partners.

Overall, the challenge of bridging the existing gap between the Northern and Southern sides of the Mediterranean, in its broader and political concepts, could be as complex as the challenge the Alliance faced when it sought to cooperate with its former adversaries in ex-Eastern bloc countries. Thus, the current drive towards becoming involved in the region's affairs should be cautious and gradual in order to avoid igniting fears, and then resistance, towards the Alliance and its endeavour. What is important is that the Alliance keeps its position neutral with regards to sensitive issues in the region, like Iraq or the Arab–Israeli conflict, in order to perform its assigned tasks successfully. Evidently, any intervention that might be perceived as an aligned position against the interests of Arab partners will hamper, if not undermine, the current role of the Alliance in the region.

It is arguable that success for the Alliance and its strategy – particularly with regards to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction – is remote unless a radical change occurs in Western policies towards the region in such a way that convinces regional partners to cooperate in a positive manner. For example, the chronic Arab–Israeli conflict is an insurmountable obstacle towards enhancing peace and security in the Middle East. This issue, as well as other long-standing issues, should be resolved in order to improve the Middle Eastern security environment. Until the required change in the Middle Eastern security environment happens, the Enhanced Dialogue and ICI will surely only reach certain limited, if important, targets, such as increasing practical cooperation, enhancing understanding, giving tailored advice and building confidence. These efforts, however, should not be underestimated, as they are paving the way towards building more constructive relationships in the future.

This study is also a call for new research to be conducted in order to envisage whether or not NATO, in its new role, could help in building a broad regional security system that could be based on reciprocal guarantees and binding treaties. Inspired by past European experience of building some level of confidence between the Eastern and Western blocs during the Cold War via the Organisation

for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the PFP, reviewed in the Chapter 2, NATO can, presumably, present a roadmap to key states in the region aimed at multilateral disarmament, and then play the role of arbiter. If NATO envisaged this aim, admitting other countries, like Libya and Syria, at a later stage could be considered in due time.

Leverett proposes, 'a grand strategy similar to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 with the former Soviet Union, respecting the security concerns of [concerned] states and absorbing them into an integrated approach to collective security for the post-9/11 world'.[10] Rizzo in interview does not exclude the possibility that NATO might help regional parties in establishing a security system in the Middle East in the future by drawing on lessons from its huge experience in this respect.[11] Meanwhile, Bin in interview holds that 'NATO can't give "security guarantees", but it can give advice, experience and support. I don't think that Partnership for Peace could be applied in the region, simply because there is no "peace" in the Middle East, although some of its lessons and ideas could foster existing cooperation'.[12]

One feasible project that could be considered by the parties in the foreseeable future is how to integrate NATO into, and/or to take responsibility for, securing the flow of crude oil and natural gas, either through vessels or pipelines, from the Middle East region to the Euro-Atlantic territories. Certainly the twin pillars of NATO and their regional partners have a common interest in achieving energy security in the region. This book also points the way to further research on the means by which the parties can cooperate for their mutual interest.

Strikingly, although NATO identified in the 1991 Strategic Concept as well as the 1999 Strategic Concept that any disruption to the flow of energy resources is a threat to its vital interests, nothing in its current cooperative links with MD/ICI countries has given focus to this issue until now. Perhaps NATO assessed that it should not address the issue until a satisfactory level of trust and interoperability with its partners is reached. It could also be presumed that Arab countries considered the participation of Israel – via MD – an obstacle towards developing a role for NATO in this regard. Again, the Arab–Israeli conflict should be, first of all, resolved in order to move forward in any direction.

In conclusion, NATO can contribute, and in a very positive manner, to changing the destiny of the region for the sake of world security and stability and its own interests, but this will never be possible until key political hurdles are overcome.

Appendix

List of persons interviewed

NATO officials

1 Alberto Bin, head of NATO's Middle East Department, coordinator of MD and ICI, 6 January 2006, Brussels.
2 Alessandro Minuto Rizzo, deputy secretary general of NATO, 6 January 2006, Brussels.
3 'K.F.' former senior officer (1999–2004), Office of the secretary general, 13 August 2007, London.
4 Lord Robertson, former NATO secretary general, 15 March 2006, London.
5 Martin Erdmann, NATO assistant secretary general for political affairs, 23 January 2008, Oberammergau.
6 Patrick Hardouin, NATO deputy assistant secretary general for political affairs and security policy, 14 March 2004, London and 25 July 2007, Brussels.
7 Vwe Hovorka, military coordinator for the NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue (1999–2006), 15 April 2007, London.

Middle East officials (MD and ICI countries)

NATO–Egypt relationship case study

8 Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (H.N.), 13 October 2007, Cairo.
9 Senior official, Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (K.E.), 6 October 2007 and 11 November 2007, Cairo.
10 NATO expert, Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (M.B.), 16 November 2007, Cairo.
11 Mahmoud Karem, ambassador, Egyptian representative to NATO, 30 November 2007, Brussels.
12 Senior military officer (M.M.), Ministry of Defence, 30 November 2007, Brussels.
13 Mohammed Shaban, ambassador, advisor to the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs, former Egyptian representative to NATO, 1996–2000, 17 November 2004, London.
14 National security officer, Egyptian Intelligence Service (N.O.), 16 October 2007, Cairo.

NATO–Kuwait relationship case study

15 Abdel Azizi Elbasr, desk officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait, 2 October 2007, Kuwait.
16 Abelaah El Saher, professor of politics and security studies, University of Kuwait, 3 October 2007, Kuwait.
17 Ali Osman, Kuwaiti Intelligence Service, 24 January 2008, Oberammergau.
18 Fadl Elhassan, diplomat, the European Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait, 15 May 2008, Rome.
19 Nabeela El Mula, ambassador, Kuwaiti representative to NATO, 23 January 2008, Oberammergau.

Officials from other MD and ICI partners

20 Abdullah Mohammed, director of research, Ministry of Defence, Qatar, 17 May 2008, Rome.
21 Abedlel Maguid Ghazi, Ministry of Defence, Morocco, 8 July 2007, Rome.
22 Blekas Jihad Eldin, deputy head of the European sector, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algeria, 23 January 2008, Oberammergau.
23 Boas Rodkin, deputy head of the European Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel, 12 May 2008, Rome.
24 Mohamed Gobreal, director of international affairs, Ministry of Defence, Tunisia, 24 January 2008, Oberammergau.
25 Mohammed El Ali, director of minister's cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates, 17 May 2008, Rome.
26 Mohammed El Khalifa, Ministry of Defence, Bahrain, 18 May 2008, Rome.
27 Mohammed Ould Cheikh, colonel, Ministry of Defence, Mauritania, 22 January 2008, Oberammergau.
28 Omar Aldwairi, Ministry of Defence, Jordan, 7 September 2007, Cairo.

NATO member country officials

29 Alessandro Cattaneo, NATO desk officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy, 10 July 2007, Rome.
30 Official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.P.), Germany, April 2007, Munich.
31 Counsellor, NATO desk officer (A.C.), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain, 15 May 2007, London.
32 Cristian Strada, director general of NATO Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania, 17 January 2007, London.
33 Eleni Georgopoulou, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece, 13 August 2007, London.
34 Eva Shinagel, deputy director, NATO policy, Department of State, Bureau of European and Euroasian Affairs, United States, 24 January 2008, Oberammergau.
35 Gonzalo Garrido, Mediterranean expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain, 13 June 2007, London.
36 Kevin Rooke, NATO desk officer, Security Policy Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom, 16 March 2007, London.
37 Mark Foster, politico-military planner, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, European and NATO Policy Division, Department of Defence, United States, 24 January 2008, Oberammergau.

Academic experts

38 Fouad M Ammor, deputy secretary general, Groupement d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Méditerranée, 16 August 2007, Cairo.
39 Jean Dufourcq, chief academic, Research Branch, NATO Defence College, 5 July 2007, Rome.
40 Jean–François Daguzan, NATO expert, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 13 August 2007, London.
41 Laura Borgomano, research adviser, expert on NATO–Mediterranean Dialogue, NATO Defence College, 5 July 2007, Rome.
42 Philip Sands, professor of international law, University College London, 15 March 2006, London.
43 Fritz Rademacher, professor of international security studies, College of International and Security Studies, George C Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, 14 August 2007, London.
44 Roberto Aliboni, vice–president, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, 8 July 2007, Rome.

Notes

Introduction

1 There are various definitions for the region of the Middle East. According to this study, the Middle East is the region that starts from Morocco in the West to the Arab Gulf countries in the East, i.e. the Arab world and Israel. The reasoning behind this definition is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
2 NATO launched this dialogue initiative at the 1994 Brussels Summit. This was the first phase of its evolving Middle Eastern policy.
3 Egypt, Israel, Tunisia, Mauritania, Morocco, Jordan (1995) and Algeria (2000).
4 Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Emirates, Oman, Saudi Arabia.
5 The following chapter reviews Western interests and worries towards the region (i.e. the determinates of its strategic importance as well as factors of instability). NATO, the political, security and military alliance between the United States and its European allies, has to draw the outlines of its policies towards the region in the light of these factors. This chapter reveals some differences between US and European visions of the region.
6 As is shown in Chapter 2, NATO has undergone a huge transformation process since the end of the Cold War, including radical changes in its doctrine, structure and policies, in order to develop a new global role. The Middle Eastern policy of NATO has emerged out of – and been influenced by – this process.
7 Chapters 3 and 4 evaluate and assess the effectiveness of NATO's role before and after 9/11.
8 Chapter 5 traces, assesses and evaluates the position of the United States towards the two stages of NATO's role in the region. It is worthy of mention that some argue that the pre-9/11 stage of NATO's role was mostly European oriented, and that the process has become almost entirely American-centered after 9/11.
9 The researcher got the names and contact details of those officials and experts from their respective authorities, such as embassies and the NATO Defense College. The researcher did his best to ensure that the list of interviewees would be balanced and representative. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, some interviewees' names were hidden in order to avoid causing any embarrassment or troubles for them.
10 Among those interviewed were high-ranking NATO officials, including one former NATO secretary general and the 'current' deputy secretary general (at the time of conducting this study). Besides these, NATO officials were chosen on the basis of being involved in the process; as too were desk officers of select European allies and scholars of this evolving topic. Given the sensitivity of the topic, and its relation to the national security concerns of relevant countries, direct research by interview was not always easy.

11 Egypt has always enjoyed a leading role in the region among the Arab countries; thus there was a need to evaluate the positive as well as negative aspects of its relationship with NATO to assess the evolution of the whole MD process. Likewise, Kuwait was the first Gulf country to join the ICI. It took more advanced steps in developing this relationship than all other Gulf partners. Justifiably, its current relationship with NATO presents the example to be followed by other ICI countries in the coming period.
12 These include strategic concepts, as well as ministerial and Summit Declarations and press releases, etc.
13 Taking into account that NATO's relation with parties concerned is always a matter of national security, it was unrealistic to hope to gather more information than what was gathered. The level of cooperation obtained from numerous officials was satisfactory, and sometimes generous. It is to be hoped that concerned states, with time, will become more open to academic research in this area.
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16 Donnelly, J. 'Realism', in Burchill, S. and Linklater, A. *Theories of International Relations*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996, p.37.
17 Ibid. p.48.
18 Ibid. p.52.
19 Ibid. p.31.
20 Morgenthau, H. *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960–70*. New York: Praeger, 1970, p.382.
21 Art, R. and Waltz, N. *Technology, Strategy and the Uses of Force*. Lanham, MD: Little Brown, 1983.
22 Jackson and Sorensen, op. cit., p.103.
23 Shiping, T. 'From Offensive Realism to Defensive Realism: A Social Evolutionary Interpretation of China's Security Strategy'. http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/SSIS/SSIS003.pdf (accessed 20 May 2009).
24 Israel is quite a different case because of its strategic alliance with the United States. According to some NATO officials, it is perceived as a Western country. Its inclusion in the process is a part of US policy that traditionally has sought to integrate Israel into its regional context.
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26 As is shown in the chapters to follow, the relationship between NATO and its Middle Eastern partners has been pragmatic in the sense that it never tried to achieve idealistic objectives, like spreading the values of human rights or good governance, etc. Also, NATO never appeared concerned with establishing security cooperation with non-democratic regimes. Evidently, NATO and its Middle Eastern partners are seeking to maximise their interests, regardless of other considerations.
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29 Ibid. p.196.
30 Jervis, R. *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005, p.16.
31 Reus–Smit, C, op. cit., pp.196–7.

32 Frederking, B. 'Constructing Post-Cold War Collective Security?', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, August 2003, p.364.
33 As will be shown in Chapter 4, some Middle Eastern partners, like Egypt, vehemently rejected any attempt from NATO to approach the ongoing debate of reform and democracy. As a result, NATO has decided to refrain from seeking a role in this respect.
34 Wohlforth, W. 'The Stability of a Unipolar World', in Little, R. and Smith, M. (eds) *Perspectives on World Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p.103.
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51 Kegley, C, op. cit., p.32.
52 Jackson, R. and Sorensen, G. *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.106.
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17 Interview with Lord Robertson, op. cit. 15 March 2006.
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17 Interview with Ambassador Mohammed El Ali, 17 May 2008
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19 Interview with Abdullah Mohammed, May 2008
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27 Interview with Lord Robertson, 15 March 2006.
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29 Ibid. paras 15, 16.
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41 Interview with Abelaah El Saher, 3 October 2007.
42 Interview with Mohammed Ould Cheikh, 22 January 2008.
43 Interview with Mohamed Gobreal, 24 January 2008.
44 Interview with General Omar Aldwairi, 7 September 2007.
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48 Arab rancour at the United States has significantly increased in recent years. The Pew Global Attitudes surveys of 20 nations in 2002 and 2003 found that the United States was less popular in the Middle East than in any other part of the world. To add to this, Zogby's 2004 survey revealed that about 98 per cent of Egyptians, 88 per cent of Moroccans, 94 per cent of Saudis and 73 per cent of Emirates' citizens had a negative attitude towards the United States, compared with 76 per cent, 61 per cent, 87 per cent, 87 per cent, consecutively, in the 2002 survey. See more details at Pew Global Attitude project (2005) *How the United States is Perceived in the Arab and Muslim Worlds.* http://pewglobal.org/commentary/display.php?AnalysisID=1001 (accessed 4 March 2006). This hatred against the United States could be ascribed to a number of factors, including the US continued support to Israel, the human catastrophic situation

in Iraq, besides supporting non-democratic regimes in the Arab world. To elaborate on only one factor which is the Iraqi case, it is strongly believed in the Arab world that the US was responsible, alongside Saddam Hussein's regime, for driving about a million Iraqis to their deaths through the toughest sanctions in history in the 1990s. For more than a decade, the United States, with unstinting determination, presided over, orchestrated and coordinated the imposition of sanctions against Iraq through the mechanism of the United Nations. This happened despite the fact that it is well-known, at least in professional, academic and research circles, that the UN sanctions mechanism cannot operate properly, still less bring desirable results, unless it is applied against democratic regimes which can be held accountable by their people. This was clearly not the case in the prolonged Iraqi ordeal. Therefore, there was no justification whatsoever for inflicting hunger and disease, leading in some cases to death, on Iraq for more than 10 years. The scale of the 'Iraqi holocaust' means that it could be described as a terrible human catastrophe. The cost in lives over the years, especially those of newborn children, was staggering. The United Nations Children's Fund estimated that 500,000 children under the age of five died, above the normal rate, between 1991 and 1998.

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5 The United States and NATO's role in the Middle East

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Also, the Institute of National Priorities Project estimated that the total cost of this war had reached $204.6 billion at the end of September 2005.

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23 Chapter 1 reviews the reasons of strategic importance of the Middle East from the US and European perspectives. As for the United States, these reasons include: heavy dependence on Middle Eastern oil; protection of its biggest ally, Israel; combating terrorism; and weapons of mass destruction. The view that prevailed post-9/11 is that the current status quo cannot be tolerated.

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Conclusion

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