ATLANTIC MEMO #39

Partners in Democracy, Partners in Security: NATO and the Arab Spring

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring has created significant challenges and unprecedented opportunities for NATO and its partners in the Mediterranean region. New security issues have emerged alongside new regimes and regional instability looms. State failure, civil conflict, and institutional collapse could present a number of major security threats, among them the creation of a refugee crisis affecting NATO members, increased illegal arms trafficking, and a breeding ground for militant groups in a Somali-like setting near European shores.

These threats highlight the need for NATO to set up a plan for fostering regional stability and developing good relations with new and emerging leaders. The changing nature of regional security and Arab governance demands a multi-faceted approach which requires NATO to draw on expertise beyond its own, especially in empowering civil society and youth groups that are the cornerstone of sustainable democracy.

Such new challenges require new partnerships and this memo intends to convey two core recommendations: restructure the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) to allow for a more incentivized and effective partnership, and partner with other institutional actors to enable NATO to offer a more comprehensive assistance package. NATO should play to its strengths while working with organizations that specialize in other tasks that are necessary to meet these goals. Only robust partnerships will allow NATO to meet these security needs in a time of greater fiscal austerity.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Building a New Mediterranean Dialogue

1.1. Strengthen the Mediterranean Dialogue's framework documents.
NATO should further encourage partner countries to engage in the full range of activities available in this framework to advance security in the region and forge lasting bonds with their governments and militaries. The Alliance should clarify its objectives on how to achieve security in the region in partnership with these countries, starting by improving the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) framework documents. Though the MD documents are not legally binding, further cooperation could be encouraged by defining benefits for collaboration and greater costs for ignoring provisions.

1.1.1. Develop an equivalent to Article 8 of the Partnership for Peace Framework.
Article 8 states that "NATO will consult with any active participant in the partnership if that partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security". Extending this confidence-building measure to the MD would show that NATO is willing to listen to concerns emerging from the region. In most cases, issues affecting their security are pertinent to NATO as well. Given the volatility of transitions, implementation should come in the context of a stable domestic political environment, contingent upon the establishment of governments that hold full control over their territory and uphold basic rights.

1.1.2. Establish a conditional invitation process for Libya.
Partnering with Libya should be a priority, with NATO setting forth a conditional invitation process to the MD. This invitation should be contingent on several preconditions tied to the establishment of a legitimate government that protects the basic rights of the population and exercises sovereignty over Libyan territory. This should not prevent NATO members from involving themselves in the transitional

process by undertaking endeavors to bolster the Libyan security forces.

1.2. Use incentives to reach out to actors with significant political influence.
Democratization requires the existence of open political space, through which the institutional foundations of democratic governance can be built and civil society can flourish. Key to cultivating such an atmosphere is the inclusion of political kingmakers (non-elected actors who hold sway over the transitional phase and political openness). NATO members can utilize their current capacities and bonds with these kingmakers to smoothen the transitional process.

1.2.1. Egypt: Offer conditional security assistance to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).
Although Security Sector Reform (SSR) is complicated by the military's dominant role in the state, NATO can still encourage an open democratic civil society by bartering its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency knowledge for SCAF support in democratization. Egyptian security issues revolve around creating an atmosphere conducive to economic activity and tourism, as the military is dealing with radical Islamists in the north Suez and tribal lawlessness in the Sinai. NATO should make it clear that its role is to provide security consultation to the military in return for speeding up the transition to civilian, democratic rule.

1.2.2. Libya: Connect the National Transitional Council (NTC) with other interest groups through direct SSR and DDR campaigns.
The NTC is challenged by militias operating throughout the country and a nascent secessionist movement. If the NTC is to become a viable, centralized democratic government, it must be able to project power and maintain a monopoly on violence. A two-step process - with SSR creating the environment for a Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) campaign - presents NATO with the opportunity to serve as an advisor and interlocutor between the NTC and other armed groups that were supported during the uprising. Furthermore, Alliance members should be encouraged to fund Libyan border guards to stem the flow of weaponry to conflicts in Northern Africa and to anti-Western radicals.

1.2.3. Tunisia: Provide consultative support for reforming its domestic security service.
Assistance in reorganizing the 100,000-strong domestic security force while enforcing civilian oversight could help ensure a fair constitutional creation process that enshrines basic rights and the foundations of a democratic system. This would build upon NATO expertise emanating from its experience in Afghanistan. Additional incentives could include a contingency plan that would help the Tunisian government develop a strategy to deal with the unstable atmosphere in neighboring Libya, endowing it with the strategic capacity to ensure protection from any possible spillover.

1.3. Reform security apparatuses through training.
In Libya, the post-revolution security situation appears open and vulnerable, while in Egypt and Tunisia, the security apparatuses remain intact but many police officers have yet to learn how to operate in a free society. NATO must take a lead role in supporting reform that strengthens the internal security apparatuses (police and military) and easing the concerns of the publics, which are understandably wary of building strong coercive institutions.

1.3.1. Use existing NATO and Member states' training facilities to educate militaries on operating in a democratic society.
NATO should strengthen the professionalism of regional militaries in order to ensure they can function responsibly in a democratic system. NATO Allies host a number of military academies well versed to offer courses on pertinent strategic security issues. NATO should offer to train more officers from regional militaries in crucial topics like civilian oversight of the armed forces, accountability of military courts, and the need for

transparency in the defense budget. More operationally-focused training courses could be conditional to attending these professionalism classes.

The NATO Defense College has been successful in building courses for MD officers and officials and its importance should be highlighted. A particular emphasis should be placed on fostering personnel who are both competent and fully adapted to their jobs in newly open societies. Training should highlight how internal security forces operate in democracies and on "lessons learned" from previous transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic governance. NATO's newest members from Central and Eastern Europe could take the lead, given their experience in transitioning from communism.

1.3.2. Establish a Bureaucratic Development Program (BDP) to foster a competent and trustworthy civil service.

Arab youth took to the streets in part to protest the rampant corruption that plagued their countries and their lives. Now NATO has the opportunity to endow those same youths with the skills necessary to serve the democratic governments they helped bring about. NATO should facilitate a mentorship program that brings Arab students and emerging public servants to NATO countries to learn how government ministries function there. While language and culture may both serve as a barrier, the use of French in several North African countries makes France, Canada, and Belgium ideal program locations. Bureaucrats from NATO and member states could also conduct training programs in Arab capitals, working with the new governments to make this possible.

2. Working with Partner Organizations

2.1. Build the capacity of the Arab League.

Partnering with the Arab League can enable the region to increase collective security capabilities. In the long run, it would be ideal if a regional organization like the Arab League had the independent capacity to carry out humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping missions, relieving the need for NATO to have to carry that burden. By emphasizing equal partnership and local ownership of the region's issues, NATO's reputation may improve as it consults with the Arab League to strengthen its peacekeeping capacities. In addition, such actions could lead to a decrease in NATO's financial involvement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

2.1.1. Strengthen the joint-defense pact in the Arab League's Charter.

NATO can provide the Arab League with expertise regarding collective security, the joint guarding of air spaces, and many other topics, including military aspects of the Partnership for Peace Framework. Logistically, NATO should focus on giving technical advice based on its own past experience dealing with defense priorities, asymmetric conflicts, and peacekeeping missions, while also staying attentive to the security concerns of Arab League member states. At the same time, NATO must take steps to ensure that such training cannot be used against NATO's interest, curbing capabilities in some realms.

2.1.2. Advise and encourage interoperability.

NATO should advise military officers from the Arab League member states on how to foster interoperability across the region. In light of heightened regional tensions, NATO could also offer to help supervise and sometimes participate in war games and military exercises that the Arab League would need to conduct.

2.2. Pave the way for a common NATO-EU approach to the Mediterranean.

The European Union has been engaged in the Southern Mediterranean for decades. Its range of activities is wide and the resources devoted are significant. Moreover, both the European Security Strategy (ESS), and NATO's Strategic Concept recognize terrorism, the proliferation of WMDs, and failed states as principle security challenges. NATO has been eager to develop a strategic partnership with the EU and the evolving

regional landscape may offer a unique window of opportunity. Considering the similar goals and memberships of the organizations and their differing capabilities, there are a number of areas ripe for collaboration.

2.2.1. Work with the EU's Youth in Action Program (YAP) to strengthen North African civil societies.
Young people will play a key role in shaping the future of the region, yet they lack the skills and experience to organize a vibrant civil society necessary to foster a functional democracy. NATO should work with the EU to include MD member states in the EU's Youth in Action Program (YAP). Arab youth would benefit greatly from the activities covered in YAP's Program One, especially its goal to harness capacity building for youth organizations and structures. Though YAP would remain primarily an EU program, NATO can contribute to the project through offering seminars on the role of the military in a democracy, sharing resources such as program locations, and ensuring the security of participants and instructors.

2.2.2. Develop an inter-institutional meeting format with the EU and Mediterranean partners.
NATO must increase coordination with countries that have mutual interests via staff-to-staff and formal consultation. This format could address issues related to security and defense, as well as other issues, such as security for tourism. Cooperation should ultimately be aimed at forging a shared approach to individual MD states, allowing NATO and the EU to offer MD states a more compelling and comprehensive partnership package, thus strengthen NATO's bargaining power.

2.2.3. Get Russia and China involved.
NATO and the EU should emphasize inclusion when it comes to shared international goals. NATO should actively and publically look for opportunities to collaborate with Russia and China in North African development, in part to quell worries about NATO's perceived "expansion" south into North Africa, but also to achieve more effective outcomes. There is an opportunity to draw on Russia and China's experience with resource management, infrastructure development, and bureaucratic management.

2.3. Increase cooperation with the OSCE.
NATO should seek to increase collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) to address the core political and social grievances facing its partner states in the region, as the OSCE has come to specialize in conflict prevention and administration in post-conflict states. The OSCE can build on its success in the Balkans and has already made a positive step forward in North Africa with its election monitoring mission in Tunisia in 2011. Areas for cooperation should include election monitoring, police reform, and civil administration.

CONCLUSION

It may be tempting to take a hands-off approach as new governments look to define their own path; however, the North Africa region is too critical to neglect. The greatest threat emerging from the Arab Spring is the possibility of state failure and institutional collapse within the post-revolutionary countries. The Alliance's prime goal is security for its Member states, and this can only be achieved by fostering strong democratic development in North Africa.

Partnerships are the key; only through strong relationships with regional governments and equally durable linkages with other inter-governmental organizations can NATO provide the diverse initiatives necessary to develop strong and stable institutions in North Africa without budgetary or mandate overreach. The recommendations presented in this memo offer a way to build these necessary relationships and form a coherent approach to this critical region.

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