

*12<sup>th</sup> NATO Regional Cooperation Course (NRCC 12)*

Graduation Address

**“The Changing Security Environment in the Middle East: Challenges,  
Strategies and Solutions”**

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# I. Introduction

- Let me begin by extending my thanks and deep appreciation for inviting me to speak in my personal and academic capacities. This presentation will focus on understanding the contemporary regional dynamics, exploring the security challenges in the region, and highlighting the potential cooperation venues among the NATO and the Partners towards such challenges.

## II. Security Dynamics in a Politically-Changing Region

- The political transition in the region has undoubtedly changed fundamental dynamics in the Middle East, with significant implications for the political and security settings of the region. Public opinion increasingly plays a more prominent role in Arab societies and, in this respect, will have a fundamental role in the formulation of disarmament and security policies.
- Given the democratic changes, parliaments—particularly through their committees on foreign affairs, Arab affairs and national security—are expected to play a more prominent role in foreign policy issues.
- As recently witnessed, the flow of masses in the streets, along with their participation in the elections, is a sign of their desire for deeper engagement in the policymaking and security concerns in the Middle East.



### III. Regional Security Challenges

1. Critical socio-economic challenges
2. Regional and cross-national terrorism
3. The proliferation of conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons
4. Education, Awareness and Capacity-Building
5. New emerging threats: cyber security context
6. A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass-Destruction in the Middle East
7. The Palestinian Issue

## **1. Critical socio-economic challenges**

- Along with the political transition sweeping the region, several Middle Eastern states face significant social problems due to the economic deficiencies coupled with rising unemployment rates.
- More efforts and demand-driven programs should be invested to help local governments create suitable environment for sustainable developing socio-economic conditions across their communities.
- That should also occur through using a tailored approach to the specific needs of each of the MD partner countries. Individual Cooperation Programs (ICP) allow interested MD countries and NATO to frame their practical cooperation in a more prospective and focused way, enabling interested countries to outline the main short and long-term objectives of their cooperation with the Alliance, in accordance with NATO's objectives and policies for the Mediterranean Dialogue.



## 2. Regional and cross-regional terrorism

- One of the most significant challenges which faces the whole region is particularly terrorism, which requires concerted international efforts to combat the phenomena of terrorism and condemn all its forms, starting with extremism to the incitement of violence. Thus, there is a need to develop an international mechanism in fighting terrorism.
- Within this Dialogue, the Mediterranean countries pronounce the need for closer cooperation in this field, taking into consideration the international character of such networks. It is believed that close cooperation is the only way for the countries of the region to identify, define and resolve the security problems of the region

### **3. The proliferation of conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons**

- The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) affects security while anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war kill people. Both can have destabilizing effects on social, societal and economic development and can represent major challenges to regional and national security.
- More efforts should be exerted to address these issues by encouraging dialogue and cooperation among Allies and partners to seek effective solutions.
- There should be more work on organizing regular international workshops, seminars and conferences on topics particularly pertinent to SALW and mine action.
- In this regard, Egypt participated at the course that NATO conducted on SALW and mine action at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany in May 2014.



#### **4. Education, Awareness and Capacity-Building**

- Education and training are key agents for development. They are complementary activities which reinforce each other. Education focuses on the function of explaining concepts, doctrines and practices and teaching procedures. Training focuses on practicing and applying that knowledge, which helps to assimilate the subject matter completely. Exercises take training a step further by testing acquired knowledge during real-life or computer-assisted exercises with a scenario involving large numbers of participants from a broad range of countries.
- Further regional cooperation should focus on assisting partner countries in their reform efforts, and help bring peace and stability to crisis-hit areas, specially in with the rise of new security threats posted from non-state actors and other terrorist organizations.



## **5. New emerging threats coming from cyber security context**

- Another emerging challenge comes from the context of Cyber Security. Development of training programs to help overcome the digital divide and help developing countries cope with international developments in the field of public policy, and to consider ways in which international and regional centers and organization can play in this regard. Also, there should be more regional and international cooperation and coordination through creating and strengthening incident response capabilities.
- Egypt contributes to the work of the UNGGE on cyber security, as part of the cumulative expertise in this regard. The work of this group remains indispensable as it provides the only universal and truly multilateral forum for deliberations and consensus building related to cyber security. These efforts should be geared towards safeguarding cyberspace from becoming an arena of cyber arms race and cyber conflict, and ensuring instead the exclusive peaceful uses which would enable the full realization of the potential of cyber security for contributing to social and economic development.

## **6. A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass-Destruction in the Middle East**

Along with the development of the Zone process, the following technical provisions need to be considered in order to achieve nuclear disarmament and non- proliferation in the Middle East:

- Dismantling and destroying existing or remaining nuclear weapons capabilities, facilities, and devices under international verification mechanisms;
- Renouncing nuclear weapons through refraining from conducting indigenous development and activities related to nuclear weapons;
- Prohibiting the transit or stationing of any nuclear explosive devices in the zone;
- Using nuclear materials and facilities for peaceful purposes only;
- Placing all nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards;
- Establishing the necessary relevant institutions and mechanisms or entities to uphold a zone, free of nuclear and other WMDs;
- Addressing the issue of verification, including identifying the role of the IAEA and other relevant organizations such as the OPCW and CTBTO.



## **7. The Palestinian Issue**

- The Palestinian issue remains to be the core issue which undermines the security of the region over the past decades. Egypt has hosted the "Gaza re-construction Conference" with an aim to improve the prospects for a political solution to the conflict by strengthening the Palestinian government's ability to shoulder its responsibility on the rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip. If the Palestinian issue remains to be the core issue , the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East remains to be a key challenge. Also the confirmation of respect of regional states as well as the NPT state parties, including NATO members, to their international obligations.

## IV. NATO and Partners: Strategies & Solutions

- The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) illustrates NATO's understanding for the link between security in Europe and security and stability in the Mediterranean. The MD has developed as an integral part of NATO's adaptation to the post-Cold War security environment, as well as an important component of the Alliance's policy of outreach and cooperation.
- The MD aims at contributing to regional security and stability, achieving better mutual understanding, and dispelling any misconceptions about NATO among Dialogue countries.
- Over the past few years, there has been good progress in realizing the goals and objectives of the Mediterranean Dialogue. There have been more frequent political discussions on wider range of issues, High level meetings have been concluded, closer contacts have been established, also progress in several areas of practical cooperation has been achieved.
- At the Prague Summit in 2002, NATO's Heads of States and Governments (HOSG) in consultations with MD partners agreed that within the non-discriminatory framework provided by the MD, consideration could also be given to organizing, with interested MD partners on case-by-case basis, +n meetings involving at least two MD partners at working level – or the level that is considered the most appropriate by NATO and MD countries – with the aim of discussing security matters of common concern such as terrorism and border security.



- (The NATO+1) format is another cooperation venue between the NATO and the partners. It occurs on a regular basis both at ambassadorial and working level; it provides an opportunity for sharing views on a range of issues relevant to the security situation in the Mediterranean, as well as on the further development of the political and practical cooperation dimensions of the Dialogue.
- At Chicago Summit in 2012, NATO'S Heads of States and Governments (HOSG) reaffirmed this approach and expressed the readiness of NATO to consult more regularly on security issues of common concern, through the Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, as well as bilateral consultations and (28+number) formats.

## V. Regional Security Cooperation: Egypt, a Case Study

- Egypt and NATO have moved closer together last few years, particularly in areas of bilateral cooperation. We welcome this trend and look forward to reinforcing it.
- For that to happen, we should discuss how we can extend our bilateral cooperation openly and frankly, and how to work together in meeting emerging security challenges , and to set the stage for years to come. It is clear that our security today is threatened in a number of ways, we are all confronted.
- Egypt fully understands that NATO has long recognized the strategic importance of the Mediterranean region, almost 20 years ago, Egypt welcomed NATO Initiative to launch the Mediterranean Dialogue with the aim of promote stability and security in North Africa and the Middle East, and to dispel any misperception on their part about NATO's reorientation after the end of the Cold War.
- In addition, Egypt developed its first Individual Cooperation Program (ICP) in October 2007; the second revised IPCP was approved in August 2014.



- If we moved to the main challenge which faces us on the national, regional and international level is particularly terrorism, which requires concerted international efforts to combat the phenomena of terrorism and condemn all its forms, starting with extremism to the incitement of violence. Thus, Egypt believes in the importance of an international mechanism in fighting terrorism.
- A recent example for this cooperation is the shared seminar between NATO and the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs that was held last month in Cairo and focused on “the relations between Egypt and NATO: Challenges and Opportunities” that witnessed the attendance of H.E Ambassador Terry Stamatopoulos Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy.

## VI. Concluding Remarks: Potential Solutions

- According to Paragraph 20 of NATO's Strategic Concept adopted in the Wales Summit 2014, the NATO-HOSG have recognized the direct threats posed by crises and conflicts beyond NATO's borders to the security of Alliance territory and populations. They further committed to engage, where possible and when necessary, to prevent crises, manage crises, stabilize post-conflict situations and support reconstruction.
- In line with the Strategic Concept of 2014, the Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) and the principles that underpin them. NATO is in a position to address the abovementioned challenges through the following points:
  - 1- More comprehensive and widespread training and education programs, focusing specifically on scientific universities, ministries, business and relevant government agencies, will be required to bolster regional capacity to the necessary level. Universities will need to be better equipped to offer degrees and diplomats on specialized subjects.



- 2- In this regard, the NATO Defense College (NDC) provides a successful example of how an educational center under NATO is working on fostering strategic level thinking on political-military matters.
- 3- The work of NDC contributes to conducting academic research and studies and stimulating considered thinking and analysis on the security challenges and opportunities present in on regional and international levels.
- 4- The continuation of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the multiplicity of its activities is regarded as a success for the multilateral relations between NATO and the Partners in the framework of this pattern and in the continuing challenges in which the region faces. However, after 20 years of cooperation with the MD, there should be an assessment of success for it.
- 5- In this context, continuing the Mediterranean Dialogue to allow the exchange of views on regional security and possible ways of strengthening it and reducing the challenges facing the region is of extensive importance. This coordination has resulted in three sessions of consultation mechanism MD-PAG. We also participated at the fourth round held in Athens early this month in addition to the meeting of the political and policy Committee as well as the meeting of the Ambassadors of the Mediterranean Dialogue with the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in Amman in December.

6- Continuing the “28+n” formula to provide a mechanism for consultations and, as appropriate, cooperation in flexible formats across and beyond existing frameworks; this mechanism can be thematic or event-driven and will develop through practice, as part of a process to enhance NATO’s partnerships.

Between June 2013 and October 2014, the (28+1) meetings were organized with all MD countries in the Political and Partnerships Committee.

7- Finally, NATO’s public awareness and outreach activities are vital for the future work of NATO in the Mediterranean and Gulf regions. More work is needed in this context to provide debriefs about NATO’s work and operations. The courses provided by NATO’s school of defense in Oberammergau, Germany, on arms control and disarmament could work as examples for how to raise awareness about such crucial topics.



- Before I finish my statement, I would like to leave you with two notes:
  - First, Congratulations to the 40 participants on having this unique opportunity to participate on such a well-tailored program, and on making it through to this moment. I am sure that everyone of you has gained fresh experience about the challenges and opportunities towards peace and security in the region.
  - Second, to remind you that you have an equally-unique responsibility to transfer the knowledge and experience you had here, and play the ToT role, specially that you are a diverse group coming from 15 different countries. Please do not make yourself the last stop for such knowledge, and make sure you pass it on to your coworkers, colleagues, and friends, because we need more people who are not only aware of the security conditions in the region, but committed to work on improving these conditions as well.

**For further readings and publications, please check:**

**<http://www.gcsp.ch/About-Us-Qui-sommes-nous/Associate-Visiting-Fellows/Ambassador-Dr-Sameh-ABOUL-ENEIN>**

***Thank You***