

9th Portuguese Atlantic Youth Seminar

Alfeite Naval Academy, Lisbon

24th to 31st July 2004

Seminar Report

"The Mediterranean Basin: Between peace and terror. The two faces of Janus."

Mikael Melin

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Place and Participants

On July 24-31, 2004, the Portuguese Atlantic Youth Association (Associação da Juventude Portuguesa do Atlântico) and the Portuguese Atlantic Commission organized the 9th Portuguese Atlantic Youth Seminar, titled "*The Mediterranean Basin: Between peace and terror. The two faces of Janus.*" The seminar was held at the premises of Alfeite Naval Base next to Lisbon and was attended by some 30 youth from NATO member and partner countries (Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, USA and Kosovo.)

1.2. Program, Lecturers and Topics

The program of the weeklong seminar included lectures, debates, presentations by seminar participants of national perspectives on NATO and concluding remarks on the final day. The program also included a visit to the Navy Museum in Lisbon, to NATO Joint Command Lisbon, to the Navy Frigate "Alvares Cabral", a trip aboard a navy vessel, as well as visits to the city of Lisbon, sports activities and socialising with participants and organisers.

Lecturers included Prof. *Maria do Ceu Pinto* from the Minho University; Army Officer, Cor. *Carlos Branco*; Prof. Victor Marques dos Santos, the Technical University of Lisbon; Prof. *Jose Lamego*, faculty of law, Lisbon University; Eng. *Pedro Pires de Miranda*, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former President of the Oil Company Petrogal; Mr. *Alberto Bin*, Head of the Regional Affairs and Mediterranean Dialogue section, NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division; Lt. Col. *Fausto Vale de Couto*, High Military Studies Institute, Lisbon; *Rem Korteweg*, Clingendael Centre for Strategic Studies, the Netherlands; Prof. *Antonio Costa Pinto*, Universidade Nova de Lisboa; Dr. *Heitor Barras Romana*, Technical University of Lisbon; Prof. *Kennedy Graham*, University of United Nations, Brügge, and Dr. *Paulo Viseu Pinheiro*, Career diplomat, Deputy Director in the Foreign Intelligence Service, Lisbon.

The topics of the lectures included: "*Trans-national terrorism: need for new security policies?*" "*NATO and the UN: Need for collaboration and policy coordination*", "*Insight to Portuguese Culture*", "*NATO-Mediterranean relations in the framework of the democratisation of the Middle Easter countries*", "*Global management of energy: a gateway to cooperation*", "*NATO's Initiatives for the Mediterranean and the broader region*", "*Security in the Mediterranean*", "*The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: a prospective analysis*", "*Southern Europe: problems of political and cultural identity*", "*The new framework of international terrorism*", "*The Iraqi crisis: The role of the UN Security Council and Regional Agencies (NATO, League of Arab states and the EU)*" and "*Future cooperation between NATO and the EU in the fight against terrorism.*"

Each lecture was followed by a debate session, chaired by some of the organizers. During the debates participants and lecturers had the possibility to discuss and ask questions related to the presentation and to the seminar topic at large.

2. SUMMARY OF LECTURES AND DEBATES

2.1. Challenges and Actors in the Mediterranean Basin¹

How the Mediterranean basin or the region is defined is not that clear. There are several definitions of which one could be from “Mauritania to Pakistan”, the Greater Middle East or the broader Middle East. Whatever the definition is, it is clear that the Mediterranean region consists of a large and heterogeneous group of countries and thus when talking about the region one should not generalize. However, it is fair to say that there are challenges in the region and that closer cooperation on political, security, economic and social issues should be encouraged.

The challenges and threats in the Mediterranean basin include concerns such as; the raise of Islamic extremism and terrorism, economic and social underdevelopment, lack of democracy, weak institutions, explosive demographic growth, illegal immigration, drug trade and other forms of organized crime. Not to mention the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict disturbing common efforts for stability even beyond the region. The Mediterranean is also one of the main supply routes of oil and natural gas and some 60 % of all known oil reserves are located in the very proximity of the region.

These realities, mentioned above, are commonly acknowledged and a number of initiatives and schemes of support have been launched by several actors such as the **European Union**, with its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (or the Barcelona process, as it is commonly known) and the newly launched European Neighbourhood Policy. **NATO** on the other hand with its Mediterranean dialogue, with the aim “*to contribute to security and stability in the Mediterranean, to achieve a better mutual understanding, and to correct misperceptions about NATO among Mediterranean Dialogue countries.*”² **OSCE** (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) have its Mediterranean Contact Group. The “**Five plus Five**” process developing cooperation includes Spain, France, Italy, Portugal and Malta, on the one hand, and Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania on the other. The **United Nations** have wide spread programs in different fields, and last but not least the **United States** with a strong naval presence and with an undisputed

¹ The sources are based, if not stated otherwise, on the lectures and debates of the seminar as well as personal notes.

² (NATO handbook, chapter 3. The Alliance’s Mediterranean Dialogue, www.nato.int) For more information see NATO policy document 9 July 2004 (<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-meddiat.htm>)

influence in the region. All these and many other actors and organization have their fingerprints in the region.

2.2. Cooperation in the Region

Consequently, it is fair to say that there is a multiplicity of actors dealing with the challenges in the Mediterranean. This is of course not bad. However, there is an apparent risk of duplication of efforts and waste of resources. As told by several lecturers during the seminar, the lack of intelligence sharing and lack of cooperation in general, between what one could call ‘actors with the same goals’, namely the EU, NATO and USA, need correction and improvement. The Iraq crisis and the subsequent war did not improve the transatlantic cooperation or relations in this field. Neither has the emerging European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) improved cooperation between the three. Nevertheless, some lecturers gave credit to the improved common efforts in the war on terrorism, a field of cooperation even more relevant to the Europeans following the 11 March 2004 bomb assaults in Madrid.

Secondly, it is hard to promote and "parachute" western European ideas for reform and values into the region. Principles of democracy, human rights, respect of minorities and gender equality can be hard to integrate into certain of the countries concerned. As one of the lecturers put it “*it might be wiser to focus more on stabilization rather than on democratisation*”.

Thirdly, how interested are the countries concerned to integrate and cooperate with e.g. the European Union and NATO? The “carrots” offered are all in a way second rate memberships without true influence in the decision making process, a fact often underscored during the seminar. However, by addressing the growing social and economic problems in the Mediterranean region, living conditions will hopefully improve and this again spill over positively in other fields strengthening long-term stability.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

For an “outsider” the challenges, threats as well as potentials on the Southern edge of the European Union and NATO seemed quite distant until this seminar. The seminar shed light on many of the issues facing us today on the non-European side of the Mediterranean basin and gave food for thought as well as fuel for lively debates how to counter them.

Given the multitude of initiatives that already exist in the Mediterranean, there is now a need for closer coordination of efforts and sharing of intelligence and experiences. A clearer division of labour between the main actors would not only make efforts more transparent but also spare a lot of resources. To complement each other rather than to compete with one and another is the way the main goal of long-term stability can be achieved.

The seminar gave an excellent opportunity for discussion, debate and contact making between members of different Atlantic Youth Associations and Atlantic Councils, as well as other security policy interested non-member participants. This kind of seminar is also without doubt an important forum for informed discussions on transatlantic relations and it will deepen knowledge and understanding as regards differences of opinion on security policies in general. In order to cover the ongoing debate in both Europe and the United States regarding Atlantic cooperation an active US presence in the capacity of participants and speakers in these seminars is important.³

The Portuguese Atlantic Youth Association as well as other youth sections of different Atlantic Councils appears to be active and well organized. Already in Lisbon the Hungarian participant presented and invited to the next seminar, which will be held in Budapest at the beginning of September 2004. Participation in this kind of youth seminars is fruitful and eye opening and should in my opinion be encouraged and supported in the future as well.

³ An American participant named Charles Kitchen, intern at the Atlantic Council of the United States, attended the seminar. However, Ambassador Robert Hunter could unfortunately not attend and speak at the seminar as was initially planned.