Click to read: NATO Defense College Research Paper No 21, June 2005 - NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative - Prospects for Development

The first paper of two concentrates on the relationship between the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). It debates the arguments for bilateral and multilateral components and highlights the distinct risk of bilateral arrangement that might engender distrust by Arab neighbours. In looking at the MD's geographical area the paper acknowledges the essential truth that in developing either bilateralism or multilateralism they are inseparable from the associated geopolitical conditions. The prospects for developing the ICI also address the bilateral approach - in particular with regard to the states comprising the Gulf
Cooperation Council (GCC). Similar risks are involved as for the MD. The analysis of variations on the 3 basic options for the potential relationship between the MD and ICI relies heavily on a number of assumptions and actions that need to happen for such a relationship to be established. The unstated need seems to arise because both organisations are focusing largely on the same area and NATO's objectives have not been made clear. Indeed the conclusion emphasises that 'it is NATO's objectives that must define the geographical area of cooperation and the nature of its instruments, not vice versa'. A point well made.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative - Possible Next Steps:
The second paper concentrates on the ICI and looks at the strategy options for NATO. This is largely an academic exercise that considers the practical aspects of what needs to be achieved and how NATO and its partners should implement ICI. The weakness of this paper is that it looks at the options purely from the NATO standpoint and that there is no real consideration of possible views of the GCC states, or for that matter of the EU to what NATO wants to achieve. The paper has value as a mind clearing exercise but it is evident that NATO needs to better define its objectives before it starts defining strategy options.