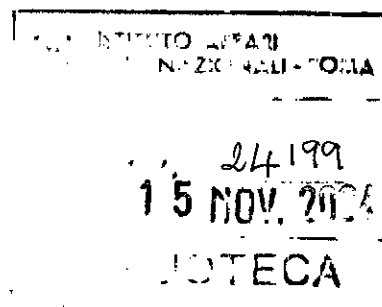


WHERE ARE WE? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Transatlantic perspectives on the broader Middle East and North Africa
Istituto affari internazionali (IAI)
Rome, 8-9/X/2004

- a. Agenda
- b. List of participants
- 1. "Promoting democratic reform in the Arab world: the strategic challenges of joint action"/ Tamara Cofman Wittes (12 p.)
- 2. "The future of Iraq : the impact on the nation and the region of unifying and divisive Iraqi trends"/ Peter Sluglett (16 p.)
- 3. "Prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace process, and for EU/US contribution"/ Yezid Sayigh (4 p.)
- 4. "Defence cooperation and democratization : NATO role towards the broader Middle East and the Mediterranean"/ Fred Tanner (15 p.)





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WHERE ARE WE? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Transatlantic Perspectives on the Broader Middle East and North Africa

International Conference organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome
with the support of
the NATO Division of Public Diplomacy and
the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Rome, 8-9 October 2004

HOTEL DONNA LAURA PALACE
Lungotevere delle Armi, 21

AGENDA

FIRST DAY: Friday, 8 October 2004

- 1:15 pm Buffet Lunch at the venue of the conference
- 2:15 pm **Introductory remarks**
- 2:30-4:00 pm **Session 1: Promoting political reform: lessons learned and new approaches**
- Speaker: **Tamara Cofman Wittes**, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.
- Respondents: **Richard Youngs**, Fundacion para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior, Madrid - **Saad Eddin Ibrahim**, Ibn Khaldun Center for Development, Cairo
- 4:00-4:30 pm *Coffee Break*
- 4:30-6:00 pm **Session 2: The Future of Iraq. The impact on the nation and the region of unifying and divisive Iraqi trends**
- Speaker: **Peter Sluglett**, Department of History, University of Utah, Salt Lake City
- Respondents: **Yasar Qatarneh**, Regional Conflict Prevention Center, Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, Amman - **Toby Dodge**, Department of Politics, Queen Mary University of London
- 8:00 pm *Dinner at the Restaurant "La Vigna dei Cardinali"*
 Key-note Speech by **Ambassador Alessandro Minuto Rizzo**, Deputy Secretary General, NATO, Brussels

SECOND DAY: Saturday, 9 October 2004

9:00-10:30 am ***Session 3: The mutual futures of Israel and Palestine. What transatlantic agenda to revive and help the process?***

Speaker: ***Yezid Sayigh***, Centre of International Studies, Cambridge University; International Institute for Strategic Studies, London

Respondents: ***Margret Johannsen***, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, University of Hamburg - ***Mark Heller***, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University

10:30-11:00 am *Coffee Break*

11:00-12:30 am ***Session 4: Defense cooperation and democratization. NATO role towards the Broader Middle East and the Mediterranean***

Speakers: ***Fred Tanner***, Academic Affairs Unit, Geneva Center for Policy Studies - ***Nicola de Santis***, Division of Public Diplomacy, NATO, Brussels

Respondent: ***Stephen Larrabee***, Rand, Washington D.C.

12:30 am -1:30 pm ***Round table: Consolidating transatlantic convergence on the Broader Middle East and North Africa***

Assia Bensalah Alaoui, Centre d'Etudes Stratégiques de Rabat, Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, Mohammed V University, Rabat – ***Alvaro de Vasconcelos***, Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais, Lisbon - ***Fidel Sendagorta***, Policy Planning Unit, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madrid - ***Nadim Shehadi***, Center for Lebanese Studies, Oxford - ***Stefano Silvestri***, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome

1:30 pm *Buffet Lunch*



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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- **Roberto Aliboni**, Vice-President and Head of the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome
- **Mustapha Aydin**, Faculty of Political Science, University of Ankara
- **Assia Bensalah Alaoui**, Senior Research-Fellow, Centre d'Etudes Stratégiques de Rabat, Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, Mohammed V University, Rabat
- **Tamara Cofman Wittes**, Research Fellow on Foreign Policy Studies, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.
- **Nicola de Santis**, Information Officer for Mediterranean Dialogue and Partner Countries, Division of Public Diplomacy, NATO, Brussels
- **Álvaro de Vasconcelos**, Director, Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais, Lisbon
- **Toby Dodge**, Lecturer, Department of Politics, Queen Mary University of London
- **Simone Guerrini**, Head of International Department, ALENIA, Rome
- **Saad Eddin Ibrahim**, Chairman, Ibn Khaldun Center for Development, Cairo
- **Amr Hamzawy**, Deputy Director, Center for European Studies, Cairo
- **Mark Heller**, Principal Research Associate, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University
- **Stefano Jedrkiewicz**, Plenipotentiary Minister, Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa, Directorate General for the Countries of the Mediterranean and Middle East, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome

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- **Margret Johannsen**, Research-Fellow, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, University of Hamburg
 - **Stephen Larrabee**, Senior Political Scientist, Rand, Washington D.C.
 - **Alessandro Minuto Rizzo**, Ambassador, Deputy Secretary General, NATO, Brussels
 - **Daniela Pioppi**, Research-Fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome
 - **Yasar Qatarneh**, Director, Regional Conflict Prevention Center, Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, Amman
 - **Yezid Sayigh**, Assistant Director of Studies, Centre of International Studies, University of Cambridge; Consulting Senior Fellow for the Middle East, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London
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 - **Richard Youngs**, Senior Researcher, Fundacion para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior, Madrid
 - **Yahyia Zoubir**, Managing Director, Thunderbird Europe, American Graduate School of International Management, France

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1

Promoting Democratic Reform in the Arab World:
The Strategic Challenges of Joint Action

by Tamara Cofman Wittes

Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution

A discussion paper prepared for
WHERE ARE WE? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
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This paper will cover three main topics. First, it will assess the transatlantic agreement on democracy promotion in the Middle East that was embodied in the three June summits, and mainly in the G-8's document on Reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA). Second, it will discuss the remaining weaknesses in approach evident on both sides of the Atlantic and the challenges they present for effective action to advance democratic reform in the Arab world. Finally, the paper will lay out two key programmatic challenges and one diplomatic challenge that remain to be tackled in formulating effective mechanisms to implement our shared objectives regarding Arab reform.

To begin, it is worth considering why the United States chose to focus its democracy promotion initiative in the MENA region in a multilateral, rather than a unilateral, framework. What led this rather self-regarding American administration to devote itself to a transatlantic approach to this issue?

- 1) The reason that is most high-minded, and also probably least important to the calculations of Bush Administration, was the desire to define a new common purpose for the transatlantic alliance, and in particular to repair frayed transatlantic ties in wake of Iraq war;
- 2) Another consideration was that American credibility in launching this new regional initiative was impaired given negative regional sentiment over the Iraq war and continued Palestinian-Israeli violence. Just as we hoped we would have had in Iraq, we sought European participation to enhance the legitimacy of the project.
- 3) Thirdly, American desire to engage jointly with Europe in this endeavor was a result of the desire to prevent Arab states from playing Europe off against American policies on this issue and thereby avoiding concerted external pressure for internal reforms (a parallel to the Quartet mechanism's main benefit). I think this motivation still plays strongly in the Administration's thinking.
- 4) Last, and a minimal but not negligible consideration: A desire to demonstrate to domestic American audiences the Administration's ability to work multilaterally on a major Middle Eastern issue.

The BMENA Initiative

With these limited motivations for joint action in mind, it is perhaps surprising, and certainly laudable, how much energy the Bush Administration invested with its international partners in producing the joint BMENA document that emerged from Sea Island and the joint statements in Ireland and Turkey at the other two summits. Let us now examine the joint action that was embodied in the G-8 document, since it is the most extensive product on regional reform that emerged from the three transatlantic summits. What do the negotiations over the BMENA Initiative, and their outcome, tell us about the possibility for joint action on this issue?

First, the G-8 document suggests that, at long last, Europe and the United States have arrived at a common understanding of the problem that confronts us in the region, and of the goals of our intended intervention on the issue of Arab reform.

- It cements a consensus among Western states that continued political stagnation in the countries of the Middle East threatens the peace and stability of that region, and the security of Western states as well. There is a shared understanding today that overcoming Arab countries' developmental stagnation is not simply a question of mitigating labor migration or generously promoting socioeconomic development, but a question of avoiding a real and increasing risk of radicalization and state failure that can produce effects directly threatening to the rest of the world.
- The G-8 document clearly articulates the goal of Arab reform as democracy. That's a step forward from the looser formulations regarding good governance or human rights that prevailed before. Stating the goal as democracy implies a set of expectations regarding political rights and political participation that we can operationalize and refer to in our relations with Arab states. If the region's efforts at reform are going to meet Western needs, as articulated in the G-8 statement, then being specific about what Western interests require of the reform process is important both for honest dialogue with regional partners, and ultimately for the effectiveness of Western intervention. How the Western states follow up on this declared goal, of course, is important and much less evident at this stage.
- The BMENA statement of principles clearly articulates that democratic values are universal. Moreover, the G-8 states agree that the uniqueness of local circumstances "must not be exploited to prevent reform," a clear reference to states, like Saudi Arabia, that claim that their faith and conservative identity make progressive social and political reform unpalatable to their societies. So the G-8 has set a useful limit on particularity, which had been used to create an obstacle to effective Western democracy promotion in the past.
- The BMENA document ensures that the dialogue on democratic reform between the West and the Middle East will include not only governments but also business and civil society groups. The document states that government, business leaders and civil society groups from the Arab world are all "full partners" in the work of democratic reform. Defining partnership in this way is new, and an important step forward in Western democracy promotion projects. Local ownership doesn't mean that governments get a monopoly on the articulation of reform goals for their citizens. Apparently the most impressive part of the preparatory Forum for the Future meetings in New York the other week was the presentations by the civil society and business leaders to the group of G8 ministers. This question of civil society's role is central to what we do now, and will be a focus in the text below.
- The G-8 process was also important in that it finally moved the United States and Europe beyond their long-running and sterile debate as to the relative urgency of attending to Arab reform or to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the initiative notes that resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is "an important element of progress in the region," it argues that "regional conflicts must not be an obstacle for reforms." At this point we recognize the necessity of action on both issues and also the limited scope for action on both issues.

But while the BMENA initiative achieved transatlantic unity behind the *goals* of regional reform, it did not provide much in the way of credible *mechanisms* to realize that commitment in the everyday relations between the Western countries and Arab states. Beyond the "Forum for the Future" and the "Democracy Assistance Dialogue," the document essentially commits G-8 states to some marginal economic and social development programs that are only tenuously related to democracy promotion. It is not lost on the regional actors, both governmental and nongovernmental, that the new money for even these small, uncontroversial programs still does not exist. In a Middle Eastern environment where Western (not just American) intentions are suspect, and where Western deeds have fallen far short of Western declarations in Iraq and Israel/Palestine, the failure of the G-8 states to commit to robust implementation of their Sea Island commitments may hamper their attempts to play a positive role in the ongoing process of political change in the Arab world.

The advocates of the BMENA initiative see the Forum for the Future as the central institution that will advance the democratic agenda and hold Arab governments accountable to both internal and external demands. But there's a flaw in its design that makes it very hard for the Forum to play its intended role. This design flaw gets to a very fundamental unresolved question in Western attempts to address this issue of Arab reform.

The Forum is meant to include a regular meeting of ministers (and, in parallel, business and civil society groups) to discuss reform issues and monitor progress on democracy. The Forum is loosely modeled on APEC Forum and the Helsinki process, two cases in which a group of sovereign states jointly created a mechanism for regular dialogue on issues including human rights and political freedoms.

But this Forum is very much unlike the Helsinki process or APEC in one key respect. The Helsinki process grew from an agreement in which Western and Eastern Bloc states jointly committed to respect each other's sovereignty and not to overturn each other's governments by force. In exchange, they agreed to a dialogue on human rights and increased freedom for civic groups at home.

The G8 forum is rooted in no such bargain. It was created with Middle Eastern states treated as "targets" of the reform dialogue. The G8 states do not link joining the forum with enjoying other benefits of the G8 reform package (and certainly not with a mutual guarantee of sovereignty). This failure means that G8 states have already given away much of the initiative's potential to persuade Arab autocrats to loosen their domestic controls. And with no human rights criteria for participating in the G8's new literacy, job training and business promotion programs, Arab states are offered the help of the West to implement economic reforms they want, while ignoring political reforms they do not.

Linking Political and Economic Reform Through Conditionality

Why does the G-8 document fall short on this key question of linking economic to political reform and providing effective economic incentives or carrots for political change? For different reasons, both the United States and her European partners have failed to assimilate the lessons they have already learned on this question from their previous experiences in trying to promote Arab reform. The fact that most economies in the Arab world are state-dominated mean that economic reform is in itself a very political act, and without determined political reform it is difficult to undertake the necessary structural reforms of Arab economies. In addition, as we know from other cases of structural reform in developing countries, economic reform alone is as likely to produce dislocation and income disparity in the short term. Without political reform, economic reform can increase, instead of decrease, citizen frustration and social instability and lead to undesirable outcomes. Moreover, in a post-9/11 world, economic development alone in the Arab world is not sufficient to meet our interests in the region's reform process – basic liberty and greater public participation is important to reduce the legitimacy of violence and the radical politics that supports it. We all know this, and yet our governments in June did not clearly integrate this understanding into their plans to support regional reform. There are different reasons in Europe and in the US for why this happened, but the result is the same.

On the European side, when Europeans launched the Barcelona Process in 1995, their main concern was economic – labor migration from the southern Mediterranean to the north was the core problem that required addressing. Because of this motivating factor, economic development *for its own sake* was a shared goal of the Mediterranean states and their European partners. This naturally made the Barcelona process in practice move much more quickly on economic development and trade relations than on its human rights agenda. In a post-9/11, post-Madrid world, that shared interest in economic development remains, but the European interest in the region's development should be broader than that. European governments at this point have reason to view economic development in the southern Mediterranean *as a means* to something larger, not so much as an end in itself. Whatever the extent of that realization (and clearly some European capitals do hold this view), it is not yet apparent in the programmatic interests of European governments, as evidenced in their commitments in the G-8 document – except for a few examples, like Italy's embrace of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue.

So there is a gap between the understanding of many European analysts, including those who have worked on the Barcelona process, and the practice of European governments, regarding the relationship between economic and political reform. Some European governments feel deeply invested in the trade and assistance relationships they have built with Arab governments, particularly North African governments, in the Euro-Med process, and they remain disinclined to embrace a policy that more tightly conditions economic relations on political reform.

On the American side, despite a *willingness* to consider greater political conditionality in economic relations (a willingness evidenced in the Millennium Challenge Account), there

is as yet no clear answer to the question of *how* to make conditionality effective, or how to prevent conditionality on political reform from exacting costs in terms of Arab cooperation with other strategic American goals in the region, specifically in the peace process and the war on terrorism. And because the Administration has no comfortable answers to these questions, it has been reluctant to upset the apple cart by restructuring its aid and trade relations with Arab states to really incorporate political reform as a goal.

So despite the lessons learned on both sides of the Atlantic, that economic reform without political reform doesn't work in the Arab world, at least for our purposes, the G-8 reform menu also emphasizes economic development, particularly private sector development, and has very little content regarding political reform. Washington, at least, is comforting itself with the theory that, in the long run, private sector growth and middle class growth tends to create pressures for greater transparency and citizen participation in governance. European capitals may also be willing satisfy themselves with this theoretical linkage between political and economic reform. Unless that complacency is challenged, we will face another round of disappointment in stalled reform or even reversed reform, just as occurred in Egypt in the 1990s. If we remain complacent and expect economic liberalization to solve our problems, we will undermine not only the credibility of our own commitment to democratic reform, but we may help to discredit among Arabs the very notion of reform as an effective answer to the contemporary problems of Arab societies.

Some simply reject the idea of conditionality as inconsistent with the principle of "partnership." If partnership means partnering with Arab governments, then that may be true. But if partnership means partnering with Arab citizens who want to improve their lives and who individually are the ones who choose to stay at home or to out-migrate, to remain productive citizens or to join a violent radical movement, if partnership means partnership with these Arab citizens, then conditioning our relations with Arab governments on their behavior toward their citizens seems wholly appropriate.

The larger Arab states, especially, have for the most part embraced a strategy of controlled liberalization in response to internal and external pressures: economic reforms to create jobs and boost growth, limited political liberalization to stifle bureaucratic opposition to the structural reform, but no real political freedom or political competition for a long time to come, if ever. It's a China model. But the United States and others have already concluded that a China-model developmental path in the Arab world is not consistent with our needs and our goals for the reform process there. And our empirical understanding, based on our own experience, is that meaningful economic reform and meaningful political reform must go hand-in-hand to be successful. That understanding means that, in principle, the United States and Europe are in clear opposition to the reform strategy embraced by many Arab regimes today. We have a basic strategic disagreement with most Arab governments on this question, with perhaps a handful of exceptions. Our governments and institutions must remember this hard-won insight as they proceed to plan new interventions on this issue.

The clear bias prior to 9/11 was to let Arab governments set the agenda for reform, and that still seems to be the preference of at least some Western states. This fundamental problem with the G-8 plan, that Arab states are essentially let off the hook, was clearly on display at the preparatory meetings for the new "Forum for the Future" in New York last week. The effort invested to get the Arab states to show up at the preparatory meeting reinforced that sense that we are mainly interested in working with and acceding to the priorities of Arab regimes, and we're willing to trade a lot of substantive progress for their willingness to participate in the project in some symbolic way. Although the participation of Arab governments in the ministerial meeting was almost universal, the substantive component of the meeting was extremely thin – the United States invested a tremendous amount of energy and diplomatic dialogue in getting ministers to come to this meeting, and all the ministers had to do was agree to come to another meeting, later.

[I don't mean to suggest that Western governments should set themselves in opposition to Arab regimes and foment popular revolutions in Arab countries (I'm not sure we could anyway). But I am arguing that we need to keep firmly in our minds why we care about Arab reform, and who the ultimate beneficiaries of this reform process are supposed to be.]

The Importance of Civil Society

In practice, because of the continued ambivalence in the US and in Europe about conditioning economic assistance to Arab governments on political reform, the gap between the G-8's enunciated reform principles and the G-8 plan of support for reform has essentially cut the regimes of the Middle East a lot of new slack, and thrown the burden for change onto the civil society in the Arab world. So our core challenge now is to figure out how to make our limited democracy assistance most effective in helping Arab civil society promote reform.

Civil society in the region may yet be small and weak, but we have heard its voice grow in strength significantly over the past two years. The G-8 document promises, in its most promising aspect, to integrate civil society and business activists in the Arab world into transatlantic discussions with Arab governments about reform. Apparently, the business and civil society meetings in New York were, by all accounts, afterthoughts as far as the US administration was concerned, and very little planning went into them as compared to the work invested in the ministerial meeting. But as it turned out, the civil society and business meetings were really the most substantive and inspiring part of the preparatory meetings, and even Secretary of State Powell, who has been a real skeptic about this whole project, came away from the civil society and business reports to the G-8 states impressed and sold on the necessity of supporting reform efforts.

Because the burden for initiative is now on civil society, Western governments and western NGOs concerned to advance the ball must successfully confront two challenges in developing and implement democracy assistance projects. We must figure out strategies to deal with two centrally important political forces: liberals and Islamists.

The first challenge for our democracy assistance is how to engage with, nurture, and strengthen Arab liberals so that they can present a credible alternative to authoritarian regimes and to radical Islamists – and how to provide this support without tarring Arab liberals with our “imperialist” brush.

It is undoubtedly true, as an empirical matter, that Arab liberals are a minority among politically active Arabs, and that they appear to be out of the mainstream of Arab public opinion. But does this mean that in fact liberals are not likely to be effective voices on behalf of democratic change in their societies? Some have been arguing that Arab liberals are an aging, shrinking, and marginal group, out of touch with their societies.

Liberals are always, in every society, a small, elite group that is in many ways isolated from the grassroots. That was true in revolutionary America, in enlightenment Europe, and in Eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Liberals are not usually that popular because liberalism is not a populist ideology. But it is not accurate, as some argue, that liberals in the Arab world are aging and decreasing in number. It may be that “liberal intellectuals” in the tradition of those who flourished in the early decades of the 20th century are aging and decreasing in number. But there is a younger generation of liberals who are not intellectuals – they are businessmen, lawyers and doctors. And they are fairly pragmatic in their approach to promoting liberal politics and liberal ideas. One of the reasons that we can’t and shouldn’t be in the business of foment anti-regime revolutionary movements in the Arab world is because liberals themselves have not universally chosen an oppositional stance in their political strategies within their own countries. They are not all dissidents, operating underground. Many are choosing right now to work via persuasion of their ruling regimes, to work within ruling parties and regime-dominated institutions to push their ideas as far as they can.

This is what makes supporting Arab liberals such a difficult challenge for Western democracy promoters. We should support those liberals who are working within their existing systems, but we need to do so in a way that doesn’t end up legitimizing the entire regime and facilitating the regimes’ attempts to coopt and neutralize their liberal critics. On the other hand, we can’t insist that liberals who wish our support stand wholly in opposition to the regimes that rule them – that makes them much more vulnerable to charges of acting as Western agents or fifth columns within their own societies. So we have to support liberals on both sides of this divide: those who are trying to achieve as much as they can by persuasion – and those who have passed the limits of allowable persuasion and are suffering the consequences of challenging their ruling regimes.

It is a difficult balance for outside assistance to strike. There are two things we can do that will help us achieve this balance:

- 1) To be very clear both among ourselves and with our regional interlocutors (government and NGO) about the principles and standards that guide our assistance – and here the explicit goal of democratic reform, as opposed to merely good governance, should be a relevant guide for us.
- 2) To stay in very close contact with the liberal activists in the countries where we are working, to ensure that our assistance (and our diplomatic pressure)

reinforce their chosen strategies. Rather than looking for chinks in the armor of the authoritarian state and stuffing in some technical assistance to try and create constituencies for reform, I think we should be working with what's already happening – if a liberal minister is trying to introduce tax reforms, what can we do to help? If a journalists' union is trying to expand its role into advocacy on behalf of real press freedom, how can we support them? Here I think the Democracy Assistance Dialogue that is part of the G-8 and that is co-chaired by Italy, Turkey and Yemen might prove a very useful coordinating institution between Western donor agencies and democracy assistance NGOs on the one hand and regional democracy activists on the other hand.

In addition to supporting Arab liberals, there is another, overlapping constituency that we must address if we want to seriously improve political freedom in this part of the world. Our second major challenge is how to integrate Islamist political movements into our vision for the region's political future, and into our strategies for promoting political reform.

Islamist movements still command the majority of what exists today as popular oppositional sentiment in the Arab world. But in our obsession with the "lesson of Algeria," namely that too-quick political opening might lead to takeovers of Arab governments by radical Islamists, we have developed a near-allergy to dealing with Islamist parties. Europe and the United States share the concern that Islamist movements represent potential spoilers in the democratization picture. We are so afraid of empowering the "wrong" Islamist movements that we don't try to empower any at all, though our embassies do maintain informal dialogues with some among them. Richard calls them the "untouchables of the democracy assistance world."

Liberals and Islamists are not necessarily mutually exclusive or mutually antagonistic groups – but the prevailing political framework in most of the Arab world today makes them behave that way. When the regimes restrict speech and association everywhere but in religious institutions, Islamists have no incentive to argue for liberal political rights. When Islamists enjoy this protected position as the only viable opposition, liberals have no incentive to show tolerance for religious values or expressions in politics. We have to press regimes to open up the public square to real political competition of political ideas in order to level this playing field and enable the emergence, where they exist, of liberal Islamist politicians. We must ensure that the Islamists with whom we engage embrace democracy as an end and not a means – and that may mean that it is best at least at first to engage them through and within a broader pro-democracy civil society coalition. But we cannot blacklist the whole bunch just because they say their political platform is religiously inspired.

* The United States and Europe have a powerful tool to aid our governments and our NGOs in exploring the possibilities for Islamist participation in building more democratic societies in the Arab world: our own Muslim diasporas. With the increased strength and political mobilization of these communities, the US and European

governments should encourage moderate voices within these communities to make themselves heard not only in their adopted homes but in their homelands as well, spreading a message of tolerance and also of Muslim thriving in situations of diversity and freedom in the West. Of course, for this message to be conveyed it must be heartfelt, and that means we must do our utmost to integrate our Muslim immigrants thoroughly into our societies and ensure their success.

* The United States has an additional resource it can draw on in the coming months and years in reevaluating its attitude toward Islamist movements in the Arab world: its growing experience in Iraq negotiating with and sharing governance responsibilities with active, grassroots Islamist parties like the Dawa and the SCIRI. While Sunni-Shia differences are important in political religion, it is nonetheless true that Iraq presents an example of an Arab political space in which multiple, legitimate, respected religious parties compete (mainly) peacefully for audience and adherents. Lessons from this model should be drawn and adapted for other locales in the region.

The Unavoidable Importance of Diplomacy

The above two points regarding liberals and Islamists concern mainly how Western actors strategically employ our democracy assistance and our democracy-building programs to facilitate the role of Arab civil society in winning its own political freedom. But there is another side to this coin that is also critical.

A final crucial challenge for Western states is how to forge effective *joint diplomatic action* toward Arab regimes to press for greater political rights and freedoms for Arab citizens. In the end, our democracy assistance to civil society is meaningless if regimes do not allow greater political freedom for those local groups to operate. If one key goal of joint action is to prevent the Arab governments from playing us off against each other, we must come to common agreement on goals regarding the enhancement of political freedom, and also on our red lines with respect to Arab executives exercising their current privileges.

In order to do this, each Western government individually must do a better job of integrating democracy promotion into our bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with the governments of the Middle East. Traditionally for all of us, democracy and human rights programs are run separately from regional bureaus, and foreign development assistance is in a third category – so the democracy agenda does not get woven into the day-to-day communications of regional bureaus with their counterparts in the Arab world. This has got to change if we hope to be effective.

Once we've done our work at home, can European and American officials present a united front on any significant diplomatic question related to the expansion of political freedom in the region? I am not optimistic on this point. Even on issues where we agree strongly on the risks of inaction and the goals of action, such as in dealing with Iran's nuclear program, we do not seem to have much success in implementing joint action in a way that impresses our Middle Eastern interlocutors. Given the inevitable intrusions of

local interests, especially including local diasporic links to certain Arab countries, it seems too much to ask that Europe and America should formulate an effective joint response to, for example, Tunisian president Ben Ali's blatant manipulation of the electoral process that is about to give him a third term in office.

Moreover, our inability so far to effectively persuade our Arab government counterparts on the question of political rights and freedoms reflects our enduring ambivalence about the project of democracy promotion, regardless of our declared commitment to that project.

Both America and Europe want to pursue reform, but to pursue it in a way that is not too destabilizing, and that does not jeopardize our other core interests in the region: stability of energy supply, counterterror cooperation, Arab-Israeli rapprochement, stabilization in Iraq. Europeans are often accused of being overly risk averse on this point, whilst Americans are often accused of being reckless. Rhetoric aside, both tend to overvalue the risk of instability and devalue the risk of doing nothing or acceding to local government preferences for glacial paces of progress. We must cure ourselves of this tendency to discount the risk of allowing the status quo to continue. We can do this by more clearly understanding the possibilities and opportunities for change, and by assessing in a more informed and more clear-eyed fashion the nature of Islamist politics in a post-Algerian-civil-war Arab world.

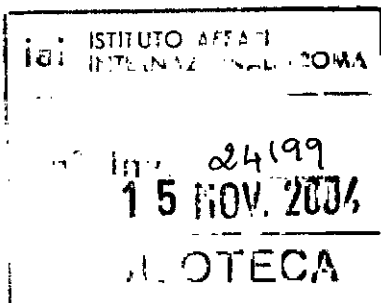
If we are to commit truly to progressing beyond the status quo in our relations with the Arab world, and commit truly to building a zone of peace, prosperity and progress, then we must **invest** in it. The paltry sums the United States has today devoted to the Middle East Partnership Initiative and the National Endowment for Democracy are nowhere near sufficient to establish our leadership. Our Congress won't even fully fund the President's new Millenium Challenge Corporation. Richard makes the same point about European investment in democracy programs in the region.

I am continually struck by the evident progress made in political development and economic reform in Turkey over the past years, progress almost entirely brought about by the effect of dangling the tremendous carrot of EU accession before the Turkish body politic. The existence of that carrot forged a pro-reform coalition out of what had been disparate and often opposing social forces: Islamists, the business community, and the human rights community. I wish that we could see such coalitions forged in Arab countries in the region, but I do not right now see any possibility of providing such a powerful carrot to Arab states as Europe provided to Turkey.

But we will only be willing to make the necessary investment when we have overcome our own ambivalence about the project itself, when we have developed and internalized what has only just emerged from the transatlantic diplomacy of the past nine months: a clear-eyed articulation of Western self-interest in the goal of reform. Too often, I think, both European and American governments in particular have wished to frame their interventions on this issue as altruistic projects of noblesse oblige or "universal values" rather than as the rational pursuit of self-interest. That has sometimes led to policies that

were too hesitant or too tolerant of the prejudices and preferences of our governmental partners. In a post- 9/11 era, we should be explicit about the self interest that motivates our engagement on this issue, because for us and for the peoples of the Middle East the self interest is both obvious and mutual. Honesty about our self-regarding interest in Arab reform also allows us to be more honest in evaluating and communicating to our counterparts in the region what types of reform do and do not meet our needs.

In the end, effective democracy promotion by Western states in the Middle East will rely on a clear-eyed and confident sense of *why* we care about this region's political future, and on our ability to slay the demons I have outlined today: the ambivalence about Islamist politics and about the consequences of reform for our other regional interests. I look forward to your comments.



International Conference

WHERE ARE WE? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

**TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA**

Organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali

*with the support of the NATO Division of Public Diplomacy
and
the German Marshall Fund of the United States*

Rome, 8-9 October 2004

PAPER BY

PETER SLUGLETT

**“The future of Iraq: the impact on the nation and the region of unifying
and divisive Iraqi trends”**

Let there be no mistake: the situation in Iraq has been degenerating rapidly over the last year, and it will almost certainly degenerate very much further before there is any significant improvement. Even that much-wished for prospect seems to be receding further and further into the background amid ominous talk of failed states, systemic failure, and so forth. Viewed from Salt Lake City, the news from Iraq offers remarkably few grounds for optimism. Thus on 27 September 2004 I heard NPR's Baghdad correspondent, Ivan Watson (on leave in the United States) speak movingly of the extent of the anarchy in the country at the present time, and the almost universal desire of middle-class Iraqis to emigrate because of the endless violence and the near-total breakdown of public security.

The Fall 2004 issue of *MERIP*,¹ a periodical which will be more familiar to some members of this audience than others, is ominously entitled 'The Iraq Impasse'. On a somewhat lighter note, it is good that the editorial of this generally gloomy issue of *MERIP*, which discusses the 9/11 report, endorses and justifies activities like the one we are engaged on in Rome:

Particularly striking is chapter 11 (of the 9/11 Report), "Foresight – and Hindsight", in which commission members argue that "the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities and management."

Implicitly, the mention of failures in imagination illustrates why the US government ought to pay more attention to the insights from academic institutions, think tanks (especially those outside the Beltway) and other non-governmental entities concerned with US policy in the Middle East and elsewhere than they currently do.

Let us hope, however unrealistic the hope may be, given our previous collective experience, that it will.

Just before settling down to begin writing a first draft of this paper early this month, I heard on the news that two Italian women from an NGO concerned with giving Iraqi children better access to education had been kidnapped from their office in Baghdad in broad daylight by a so far unidentified group – they were released unharmed on 28 September. The NPR reporter in Baghdad commented wearily that such events put further dampeners on what he described as 'an already somewhat lacklustre reconstruction effort'. That day, 9 September, also brought the grim news of the thousandth US death in Iraq. In spite of this, a combination of evasiveness and economy with the truth on the Bush side, the curious but apparently pervasive notion that it is somehow unpatriotic to dwell on the administration's ineptness and incompetence, and an apparent lack of focus on the Kerry side (although

¹ *Middle East Report*, Fall 2004, No 232.

this has begun to change somewhat in the last couple of weeks) means that the sheer magnitude of the failure of the Bush administration's policy in Iraq is making less impact on public opinion in the United States than an observer on Mars might reasonably have expected. It will be interesting to see how this topic is handled in the first of the presidential debates on 30 September, the day on which this paper is due to be sent to the two respondents.

Contemplation of either the immediate or the long term future of Iraq leaves little room for complacency. In general, it is difficult to see how the US and the UK will be able to extricate themselves either with ease or with honour from the pit which they have been so assiduously digging for themselves, particularly the US, over the past year and a half. Fairly soon, I would guess, the fast diminishing fund of good will which the coalition could capitalise upon for the first few months of the occupation among its many potential sympathisers in Iraq will reach rock bottom, especially in Baghdad and central Iraq.

In a recent article,² Larry Diamond of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, who served with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad between January and April 2004, gives a useful insider perspective on many of the blunders that observers of the process further removed from the scene have also been highlighting for several months. In 'What went Wrong in Iraq' (without a question mark) Diamond catalogues the many errors of judgement of the coalition forces and the CPA, from the point of view of both design and implementation. On his list of the most significant of these are: the inadequate numbers of troops deployed for the operation in the first place; the lack of attention to the kind of peace keeping force which would be required, and what duties it would need to perform (after all, 'victory' could never have been seriously in doubt); the wilful failure on the part of the Pentagon to take proper account of the detailed planning exercises that the State Department had been carrying out since at least 2001; the decision simply to disband the Iraqi armed forces in May 2003 without even attempting to confiscate their weapons – the list goes on and on.

In addition, the spectacle which the US has made of itself in Iraq has not gone unnoticed and has not been without negative consequences in other parts of the region. Thus in Afghanistan, for example, the Bush administration's decision to concentrate military and financial resources almost exclusively on Iraq has put severe and very obvious limits on what was widely heralded as a major exercise in nation-

² 'What Went Wrong in Iraq', *Foreign Affairs*, 83, 5, September/October 2004, pp. 34-56.

building and national reconstruction which began early in 2002. Essentially, the US has left Afghanistan to stew in its own juice; the writ of the government barely extends to the outskirts of Kabul: warlords, many of whom are quite as nasty as the Taliban, are in charge in the provinces, al-Qa'ida and its allies have not been completely overcome, and the cultivation of opium, under the protection, and with the active encouragement, of the warlords whom the hands-off policy of the US has permitted to flourish, is once more the country's largest source of income. In addition, the search for Bin Laden has been surreptitiously moved to the back burner.

In broad terms, the administration's obsession with Iraq has transformed the war against terrorism into the war in Iraq, and the incompetence with which matters in Iraq have been conducted has actually increased the threats America faces from terrorism. In a recent article,³ James Fallows reports: "Let me tell you my gut feeling," a senior figure at one of America's military-sponsored think tanks told me recently after we had talked ... about details of the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq ... "In my view we are much, much worse off now than when we went into Iraq. That is not a partisan position. I voted for these guys". (A few paragraphs earlier, Fallows comments: "in the nature of things, soldiers and spies are mainly Republicans"). Of course, this individual can't be quoted by name, since he is still employed: he himself cited the cases of such critics or doubters as Joseph Wilson, Richard Clarke, and Generals Eric Shinseki and Anthony Zinni. There is probably a limit to the benefits of hindsight, but it would have taken only fairly modest expertise to predict that, for example, the heaviest resistance outside Baghdad would come from the smaller towns immediately to the west and north of the capital (Samarra', Ramadi, Falluja) where much of the bedrock of support for the previous regime came from, but which were also known to be susceptible to 'jihadism' (to use a modern media term), or Sunni Islamic extremism⁴. These towns are also fairly easily accessible from the famously porous Syrian border, long 'guarded' only by sporadic US patrols, through which the infamous Abu Musa'b al-Zarqawi was evidently able to slip.

It does not seem particularly useful to engage with some of the odder conspiracy theories in vogue in certain quarters, to the effect that the events which have unfolded in Iraq are somehow part of a

³ 'How the War in Iraq Undermined the War on Terror', *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2004, pp. 68-88

⁴ Although this general sentiment has a longer history than is often realised. The previously secular Saddam Husayn's appeal for a *jihad* against the enemies of Islam in the spring of 1990 would have resonated among this social and geographical constituency. See Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958: from revolution to Dictatorship*, London, I.B. Tauris, 3rd edition, 2001, p. 282.

coherent plan designed to subordinate Iraq more effectively to US interests. Of course, there is evidence that the neo-conservatives within the administration were anxious to reduce US dependence on Sa'udi Arabia, and that some of them thought that supporting a hard-line Israeli government and attempting to create a dependent and subservient regime in Iraq would be helpful. However, the current scenario does not seem likely to enhance the neo-cons' objectives in any very obvious manner, and in any case, there are all sorts of reasons, including any US administration's seeming inability even to open the taboo subject of trying to encourage ordinary Americans to use less gas-guzzling motor cars, why it is difficult for the US to dispense entirely with Saudi Arabia. But it is hard to support a hypothesis in which the present chaotic situation in Iraq is the result of *deliberate planning* in some form or other, the wilful setting of Sunnis against Shi'is, for example, in order to fulfil some deadly principle of 'divide and rule'. But, as Diamond remarks, 'In post-conflict situations in which the state has collapsed, security trumps everything: it is the central pedestal that supports all else. Without some minimum level of security, people cannot engage in trade and commerce, organize to rebuild their communities, or participate meaningfully in politics.'⁵

Continuing this sad litany, one of the desiderata which Diamond expressed recently on NPR (but not dwelt upon to any great extent in the article in *Foreign Affairs*, which was presumably written some months ago) has also been shown to be more flimsy in substance than he and others would wish to be the case. He and other commentators believe, perhaps somewhat desperately, that the security situation will be gradually alleviated as and when responsibility for security is handed over to Iraqis. Unfortunately, the various forces which have combined to resist the occupation have not been slow to cotton on to this in the last few weeks. They have targetted not only individuals working for the interim administration (as they did employees of the provisional government before the end of June 2004) but those queueing up to apply to work for the restructured security services of the nominally independent government, even in cities which the coalition claims to be in control. Of course, the situation is not helped by the inadequacy of the resources allocated to the training of policemen and border guards.

Clearly, the most urgent task facing the coalition is precisely that, to restore, or bring into being, some minimum level of civic order, a task whose accomplishment, at least at the moment, appears to be becoming more impossible as each day passes. Parts of the country (Falluja, Najaf at certain times) are developing into no go areas where coalition forces cannot or do not go, and even worse, where no

⁵ 'What Went Wrong in Iraq', ... p. 37.

single faction dominates. The scale of civilian casualties which would result from the recapture of, say, Falluja, is presumably too massive to contemplate. In such circumstances, the good Dr 'Allawi's apparent determination to press ahead with national elections in January, though music in Mr Bush's ears, means that he and I (and probably most of those professionally concerned with Middle Eastern studies) must have very different conceptions of what such elections might be supposed to demonstrate, since, at the very least, it will be impossible to hold them in areas which the US does not control. 'Allawi's panglossian assertions (but he would, wouldn't he ?) seemed in stark contradiction to the sheer awfulness of the daily realities experienced by Ivan Watson, the NPR correspondent whom I heard at the end of September. Furthermore, to touch on a matter eloquently dealt with in a recent article by Toby Dodge, ⁶ if these elections are to take place in some three months' time, who will the Iraqis be voting for anyway?

Originally, it seems, the plan put forward by the UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi in February 2004 envisaged a government of technocrats who would step down after the January 2005 elections, that is a government whose members would not themselves immediately run for elective office. In spite of US assurances, Brahimi was not able to get his way, and the interim government is full of politicians from the old exile parties who have little or no resonance in the country at large (apart from Kurdistan). As Dodge says, 'After describing Council members as "feckless" and incapable of reaching out to the wider Iraqi population last November [2003], the CPA has brought these very same people back into government and entrusted them – and by extension, their parties – with the creation of Iraq's new democracy'. ⁷ Although many, perhaps most, of those involved are decent people, the performance of the 'new' government over its first months in office does not augur particularly well, in the sense of its ability either to institutionalise support in the country as a whole, or to be seen to be keeping any sort of appropriate distance from Mr Negroponte and his officials, let alone taking any major steps towards the restoration of public security. Of course, it would be wrong to underestimate the immensity of the task facing any attempts to restore, or more accurately create democracy and democratic institutions in a country that has been so ravaged so dreadfully and for so long, but it is not difficult to envisage many more potentially successful and viable scenarios than the ones with which Iraqis have been and will be presented.

⁶ 'A Sovereign Iraq?', *Survival*, 46, 3, Autumn 2004, pp. 39-58.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Before I try to say something about the local situation and its repercussions, it is worth mentioning the broader international perspective. As we all know, the administration did not make much effort to obtain United Nations support for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, because it knew it would not get it. In consequence, the 'coalition of the willing' consists of the United States (130,000 troops), the United Kingdom (9,000 troops), Italy (3,000 troops), Poland (2,460) and some thirty other countries contributing a further 10,000 troops, with contingents ranging between 1,600 (Ukraine) and 25 (Kazakhstan). Spain, it will be remembered, pulled out its 1,300 troops as a result of the elections which took place soon after the terrorist bombing of the main railway station in Madrid last spring, and the Philippines pulled out its 80 troops after several kidnappings of Filipino truck drivers and other service workers.⁸ In the same way (although there are other reasons in play here as well), the United States has been unsuccessful in its efforts to obtain international financial assistance for Iraq (and generally for Afghanistan). Thus it failed in its efforts to push round the begging bowl at the Madrid donor conference in August 2003; much the same kind of disdain was evident at the session of the UN General Assembly in September 2004, where none too subtle hints were dropped about adhering to the 'rule of law.'

Part of this international disapproval, and the unwillingness to contribute to what might otherwise have seemed a worthy cause, is the obvious corruption of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the scandalous awards of extremely lucrative contracts to American companies, often as a result of tenders with a single applicant. Most of us will have heard of Halliburton, Bechtel, and Kellogg Brown and Root; rather fewer, myself included, are likely to have heard of the Research Triangle Institute, based in Research Triangle, North Carolina, a partner of USAID, 'the sole bidder for a one year, \$167.9 million deal [awarded in March 2003] to set up 108 local and provincial councils. It retained this contract in 2004.'⁹ The absurdity of RTI's activities, its lack of expertise, its lack of Arabic speakers, would be comical were its failings not so emblematic of US activity in Iraq. At another level, I began to wonder

⁸ I have taken the figures from <http://www.geocities.com/pwhce/willing.html#list4>. Although Britain has sent a relatively sizeable contingent to Iraq, British public opinion has always been profoundly opposed both to the war and to the commitment of British troops. Similarly, a survey conducted for *Corriere della Sera* at the end of March 2003 showed that 70% of the Italian public were opposed to their government's support for the impending war in Iraq.

⁹ Khalid Mustafa Medani, 'State Building in Reverse; the Neo-Liberal "Reconstruction" of Iraq' *MERIP Reports*, 232, Fall 2004, pp. 28-35. See also Herbert Docena, 'Silent Battalions of "Democracy", *ibid.*, pp. 14-21.

why so many Filipinos, Turks, and so on are being kidnapped in Iraq – what are they doing there ? The answer is that in spite of massive unemployment, foreign contractors are not employing Iraqis, preferring to hire personnel from South and South East Asia either to service the US occupation forces or to ‘reconstruct Iraq’. It is difficult to imagine practices more likely to inflame local resentment. There seems no end to such damaging insensitivity.

Perhaps the fact that the ‘coalition of the willing’ is composed of so few really significant international players (apart from Britain, if indeed Britain is considered significant) is crucial in explaining why it has held together for so long. President Bush carried the great majority of the world with him in the invasion of Afghanistan; he could not do the same for the invasion of Iraq, in spite of the scare stories of Iraq’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, which seemed plausible enough at the time. On recent trips to Europe from the south western United States, I am struck by the depths of the hostility to the United States expressed by both old friends and casual acquaintances whom I would not describe as professionally anti-American, although at least some of this hostility is occasioned as much by America’s unswerving support of Ariel Sharon as it is by American activity in Iraq. In this situation, in which the United States and Britain seem to be unable to do anything other than exacerbate matters, I have to confess myself completely at a loss. Of course, I am of course a historian who has no way of influencing anyone unless they read the things that I write, but I have never been gloomier about the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East since I first became interested in the region more than forty years ago.

At this point, perhaps, and in spite of all that I have said, there is one thing on which I find myself bound to agree with George W. Bush and Tony Blair. In principle, I do believe that Iraq is better off without Saddam Husayn. His removal brought a very dark chapter in the history of Iraq, and indeed of the region as a whole, to an end. No internal peace and reconciliation in Iraq could be achieved until Saddam Husayn and his henchmen ceased to be in power, and it was always clear that the opposition to the regime within Iraq would never have been able to effect its removal on their own. For this reason, perhaps naively, I supported a war whose declared objective was to remove Saddam Husayn. In addition, while I thought it most unlikely, given their very different political ‘principles’ that there were operational contacts between Iraq and al-Qa’ida, but not knowing then what we all know now, I was worried about the possibility that Iraq had access to weapons of mass destruction. However, it is extremely misguided to imagine that the mantra, so often uttered by Bush and Blair to the effect that

'The world is a better (even safer) place without Saddam Husayn' ¹⁰ somehow adequately explains, even excuses, the bungling, incompetence and disasters of American policy in Iraq. It doesn't. It's like statements evoking 'family values' which are intended to call a halt to further rational discussion.

There is no doubt that the world is better off without Saddam Husayn. But does the end justify the utter ineptitude of the means? Does the fact that the Pentagon seems to have ignored and brushed aside all the (remarkably accurate) 'day after' scenarios not raise further questions? Does Senator Kerry not have a point when he questions President Bush's airy dismissal of the findings of the National Intelligence Estimate, which points to a steadily worsening situation,¹¹ the President's evidently erroneous assertions to the effect that "We're making progress on the ground"? Why should agreement on ends necessarily imply agreement on means, especially when the means have been so obviously disastrous? Most Iraqis wanted to get rid of Saddam Husayn, and they were unable to do it on their own, but they did not want this to be accompanied by an almost total breakdown of public security in large swathes of the country. Nor did they actively seek the installation of a government composed almost entirely of former exiles, who, without necessarily questioning their personal integrity (and Dr Dhia Ja'far and Dr 'Allawi are worlds away from Ahmad Chalabi and his cronies), are self-evidently American puppets.

In a similar vein, and at the risk of stating the obvious, in an ideal world, one country should not send an army of occupation to another, nor should it seek to compensate itself for the military expenditure it has incurred by awarding a number of lucrative post war and reconstruction contracts to its own nationals, in processes which, to say the least, are evidently far from transparent. And so on, and so on. But, while I am highly critical of the incompetence and sheer stupidity of US policy in Iraq, the US has indeed overthrown a vicious and isolated regime, and in addition willing the US not to be there in the first place is to deny reality, however uncomfortable this may be. I do not know whether the US will or indeed can succeed in the long term in what Paul Wolfowitz and others claim to wish to achieve, that is, bringing democracy to the Middle East. This laudable goal would signal the end, or the very great modification, of the present regimes in Saudi Arabia and Syria, and perhaps those in Egypt and Jordan, and in Iran (although in Iran the people may, very painfully, be able to do it by themselves) Arab regimes are almost universally execrated by those who are unfortunate enough to live under them, partly, perhaps largely, because of the support which most of the regimes, including Iraq, receive, or

¹⁰ E.g. as reiterated by Blair at the Labour Party Conference on 28 September 2004.

¹¹ Though some of the NIE's conclusions seem misconceived: see below.

have received, quite openly from the United States. On the other hand, the construction, or the encouragement, of democracy is not an unworthy aim, and indeed it is an objective which will command almost universal support throughout the region, in much the same way as it has done in South America. The main problem, it seems in Iraq at the moment, is getting it right.

Let me now try to examine the impact on Iraq and its neighbours of the events that have taken place there over the past eighteen odd months. The most ubiquitous and apparently insoluble problem, as I have said before, which is a direct consequence of the inadequate numbers of troops assigned to the operation, is that of public order, which has been deteriorating steadily since April 2003. Car bombs go off daily in Baghdad, Mosul or Kirkuk; Falluja, Samarra' and Ramadi are no go areas; Karbala' and Najaf are perpetual potential flashpoints for the expression of Shi'i hostility to the US occupation, not, generally, on the part of a united front of local inhabitants but on the part of adherents of Muqtadir al-Sar's Mahdi army. The US has recently felt it necessary to mount mortar attacks on Sadr City, (formerly Madinat al-Thawra, then Madinat Saddam) to attempt to flush out the opposition. It is significant that the south of the country, largely under British control, is very much quieter; this is perhaps partly because the British presence is less intrusive, and the local population perhaps more unanimously relieved that the regime has been overthrown, but maybe also because of the fund of experience in dealing with hostile urban environments that British troops have gained in Kosovo and of course in Northern Ireland.

I have to say something about the nature of the insurgency, although my understanding of it is necessarily rather sketchy. Among the Sunni Arabs, I suspect that the part being played by the 'old Ba'thists' *as such* is probably rather minimal, since there is not all that much ideological wind left in that particular set of bagpipes. It is of course true that foreign military occupation, especially as tactlessly conducted as this has been, is not pleasant for anyone, but the call to rally round the banner of Ba'thism does not seem likely to arouse widespread popular appeal. On the other hand, jihadism, or Sunni Islamic activism, probably has much wider appeal, and it may be that the former Ba'thists have slipped more or less seamlessly from one loose opposition grouping to another. This is the kind of resistance emanating from the Sunni Arab areas within a radius of, say 100-150 kilometres around Baghdad.¹² Much of it is probably directed by individuals with links of some kind or other to al-Qa'ida,

¹² Although a little dated, 'The Sunni Insurgency in Iraq' by Ahmed S. Hashem, *Middle East Perspectives*, The Middle East Institute, August 2003, remains a useful and highly articulate guide to the subject.

like al-Zarqawi, who are responsible for most of the set piece attacks on buildings or institutions in Baghdad and elsewhere, or on individuals or groups working for, or hoping to work for, the provisional government. The Syrian and Jordanian borders with Iraq are so long and so unremarkable – in the sense that they are lines in the sand rather than separations marked by clear geographical features – that fairly large numbers of troops (on either side of the border) would be needed to stop infiltration from outside. In spite of the Pentagon's assertions to the contrary, it of course is very far from Bashshar al-Asad's interests to encourage anything of this kind – it is far more likely that the Syrian military cannot stop them. On the Jordanian frontier, I presume King 'Abdullah finds himself in much the same position although he is not publicly lambasted for it.

On the other hand, the no-go Sunni areas I mentioned earlier (Falluja, Ramadi, Samarra', perhaps Ba'quba), seem to be controlled by home-grown leaders. They do not seem to be in the hands of any one group, but of several different factions, and it is conceivable that they may eventually attack one another in a struggle to obtain the upper hand, a situation reminiscent of the Lebanese civil war. If this is in fact so, it is extremely serious and will not easily be overcome by whatever palliatives the interim government and the US may think fit to offer. If it was simply a confrontation between 'the city of X' and 'the occupation forces' then a workable compromise might be arrived at, but if the 'city of X' is not controlled by any one group, negotiations are that much more difficult.

The 'radical' Shi'i opposition, on the other hand, and again, I must stress, when viewing it from a very great distance, seems to be less 'systemic' and more an expression of frustration at the ever widening gap between the promise of liberation and the everyday reality of shortages of power and water, unemployment, inadequate provision of basic services, and so on. The United States has now realised that it is pretty much dependent on maintaining the support of the Shi'i clerical hierarchy, and is even prepared, for example, to allow Muqtadir al-Sadr to participate in politics if his followers disarm and behave like a political party (although I am not sure how realistic an expectation this may be). There is obviously *some* infiltration from Iran, but I am not sure how alarming this really is, given that the Iranians, like the Syrians, have less to gain from anarchy than from stability in Iraq. In short, the problems in the Sunni areas and Baghdad are of a far greater order of gravity than those posed by Shi'i militants, partly because Shi'i demands are in a sense more 'conventional', bread and butter, and ultimately easier to satisfy, and partly, as was demonstrated during the summer, the clerical hierarchy is both unified and at least for the moment able to make leaders like al-Sadr toe the line. In contrast, there are no similar authority figures for the factional leaders in Ramadi to respond or listen to.

Again, although there is no doubt that the situation is far more serious than Mr Bush purports to think it is, I wonder whether the assertion in the National Intelligence Estimate to the effect that there is quite a large possibility of 'civil war' is valid, unless we understand this as 'intra-Sunni fighting'. The prospect of Shi'is and Sunnis fighting each other does not, at least, seem immediate, partly because, except for Baghdad (where some 12 out of 25 million Iraqis live), the communities tend to live apart from each other; so far, there is no fire-eating sectarian talk emanating from the Shi'i leadership, and the Shi'is seem fairly united politically. Hence, this prospect seems about as likely as Sunnis and Shi'is uniting to force the occupiers out.

At this point, some of those supposedly 'in the know' cite the 'national rising' of 1920, called somewhat fancifully in Iraqi history books the 'Great Iraqi Revolution' (*thawra 'ishrin, al-thawra al-'iraqiyya al-kubra*).¹³ This was, as far as I know, the first and only time in modern Iraqi history that the interests of the Shi'i tribes of southern Iraq and what might be called the Sunni urban nationalists and their Sunni tribal allies, came together in a combined and loosely coordinated move to try to get the British out. It was a highly specific and unique event, and ushered in a period which lasted until the ousting of the regime of Saddam Husayn; it was the prelude to the construction of an Iraq state in which, with British help, a small minority of Sunni Arabs ruled a majority of Shi'is and Kurds. However fragile and ramshackle the parliamentary system which may be devised over the next few months, the Shi'is are bound to have a majority since they are so much more numerous; an ironic feature of Saddam Husayn's regime was, for that very reason, that all the puppet parliaments which it sponsored had Shi'i majorities.

This seems a good point to raise another hoary old spectre, the prospect of Iraq falling apart into what are described as its Sunni Arab, Shi'i Arab and Kurdish 'components'. This has always seemed palpable nonsense. However, the overthrow of the Ba'th regime has facilitated a far likelier outcome, the emergence of a federal state consisting of 'the Kurdish areas' on the one hand and 'the rest of Iraq' on the other. Since the Kurds have been running their own affairs for some twelve years, they will not wish to be dominated by Baghdad at any time in the future, and in that sense a form of federation

¹³ See Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932*, London, Ithaca Press, 1976, pp. 39-43, and the detailed account given by Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La formation de l'Irak contemporain : le rôle politique des ulémas chiites à la fin de la domination ottomane et au moment de la construction de l'Etat irakien*, Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1991, Livre VI, 'La Révolution de 1920, pp. 381-422 (especially section C, 'La révolution de 1920, un mythe diversement interprété', pp. 414-422)

which gives autonomy to Iraqi Kurdistan is not unreasonable project. However, that would be the beginning and end of the amount of federation which will be sought now or in the future. In any case, where would the Sunni and Shi'i Arab parts of Iraq go? To some sort of union with Iran ? or with Syria ? or Sa'udi Arabia ? It was precisely this sort of far-fetched nonsense being fed to him by his own advisors, together with the Turks and the Sa'udis, which combined to prevent George H W Bush from imposing a more rigorous peace on Saddam Husayn in 1991, and thus prolonging the whole dismal affair another twelve years.

Far more likely than 'the break up of Iraq' is the kind of sectarian factionalism which may arise from an over-emphasis on sectarian affiliation. As I scarcely need tell an audience of specialists, religious affiliation in Iraq and elsewhere in the Muslim world is something that one inherits, passively as it were, rather than something which one necessarily embraces actively. To make it plain, while religious affiliation and activism in the United States is very largely a matter of choice, this choice is not so easily available (because of social and community pressures) in much of the Muslim world. Hence, trying to fit people into neat categories based on their sectarian affiliation, as is happening in Iraq, let alone actually dividing up the political and economic spoils on the basis of sectarian affiliation, is not only ill-judged but highly dangerous. Perhaps the most negative aspect of this approach is that it suggests that people *only* relate to each other in this way, rather than as fathers, sons, shopkeepers, citizens desiring a better life, and so forth. In this and other obvious and more tragic ways, Lebanon illustrates the pitfalls of sectarianism, and how important it is for the United States not to help create it. In fact, most Iraqis, unlike, say, many Syrians, were never very enthusiastic about Arab nationalism, and generally feel a much stronger sense of Iraqi identity. An over utilised but nevertheless useful example of this is Iraq's war with Iran in the 1980s, which was largely fought between Iranian Shi'i conscripts on one side against Iraqi Shi'i conscripts on the other.

In addition to the absence of security, the palpable absurdity of US attempts to create democracy *ex nihilo* has resulted in the establishment of a puppet government in Baghdad, and the creation of provincial and municipal assemblies that are essentially unrepresentative. Here the Americans do not appear to be aware of Britain's policies during the Occupation and Mandate (1914-1932), when it relied upon those whom it chose to regard as 'traditional local leaders', the tribal shaykhs, whose historical moment had passed but who could, with British support, claim to be representative of their areas. After being swept aside in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Saddam Husayn decided to revive the powers of the tribal shaykhs in an attempt to consolidate his regime more widely in the countryside, but

this move was widely and correctly regarded at the time as completely fraudulent.¹⁴ A further curious feature of the early months of the occupation was the failure to reach out to the Shi'i clerical leadership at both national and local levels, since it constituted an influential group almost entirely untainted by any association with the previous regime. (Incidentally, this group was always ostracised by the British on the grounds of its 'extremism'.) The moderate Ayatullah Baqir al-Hakim, for instance, assassinated in Najaf in October 2003, was a fairly typical member of the leadership. Although having escaped to Iran some fifteen years earlier, al-Hakim never identified himself closely with his Iranian counterparts, and his speeches in the first few months of the occupation explicitly rejected the notion of creating an Islamic republic in Iraq on the grounds that it would be unacceptable to a significant majority of the population. This kind of moderation would have been a valuable asset to the United States, and it seems likely that had more serious overtures been made to al-Hakim and his circle, support for less reasonable Shi'i religious elements such as Muqtadir al-Sadr might have been more limited. Eventually the US seems to have grasped this, as evidenced by its seeking the aid of Ayatullah Sistani, another strong opponent of the notion of creating an Islamic state in Iraq.

What are some of the more significant results of eighteen months of coalition occupation apart from the overthrow of the previous regime? So far I have touched on the relative isolation of the United States in the forum of world public opinion, the general lack of support for the invasion in world, and especially European, public opinion, the negative consequences of the invasion both for Afghanistan and for the 'war on terror'. In Iraq itself there has been ever growing insecurity, the rise of Sunni Islamic jihadism and other religious insurgency, the rise of factionalism and anarchy, the installation of an interim government which has little or no resonance in the country as a whole, and the general disillusionment of the population with the occupation, the slow pace of reconstruction, and so on. Very briefly, I would like to sketch some of the repercussions of these many negative outcomes for the region as a whole.

While a substantial reason for the absence of any progress towards a solution to the Palestine-Israeli impasse over the past four years must be laid at the door of Yasir 'Arafat, it would be absurd to depict the Israeli side as a virtuous rejected suitor.¹⁵ It is also the case that both before and after the invasion

¹⁴ Such government appointees were popularly derided as *shuyukh al-tisa'inat*, the shaykhs of the nineties.

¹⁵ If one is to believe the argument put forward by Dennis Ross in *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, 2004, to the effect that a major spectre haunting 'Arafat is that of

of Iraq, the Bush administration took only the most perfunctory steps towards helping to implement a peace settlement. The Road Map of 30 April 2003 has proved almost completely irrelevant, as would be the case with any settlement which neither party is obliged to accept. Of course, the fact that the Bush administration has supported virtually any policy of the Likud government, however provocative or outrageous, has severely damaged the United States' credibility in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and also destroyed the admittedly thinning pretence that the United States might be considered an 'honest broker' in the conflict. Given that Senator Kerry has inherited most of his advisers on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from President Clinton, it is doubtful whether a change of administration would greatly affect American policy in that quarter. In general, the combination of extreme partiality towards Israel and the mess that has been made in Iraq has produced a general diminution of respect towards the United States among ordinary people in the region.

Iran, Syria and Turkey are extremely concerned at the effects that anarchy, or state failure, in Iraq might have on their own populations. The regimes in Iran and Turkey are fairly stable, Syria somewhat less so, and of course allegations of Syrian support for 'terrorism' formed the grounds for the passing of the Syrian Accountability Act of May 2003, which involves some (albeit fairly mild) US sanctions against Syria. As elsewhere in the region, ordinary people are pleased that the dictatorship has been overthrown, but fearful of what may follow unless stability returns. If, as seems likely, Turkey's application to begin negotiations for European Community membership is successful later this year, the Turks will have to be even nicer to their Kurds than they have been beginning to be over the last few years; it is not clear how this will affect their attitudes to an Iraqi Kurdistan which might form part of a federal Iraqi state. For both Iran and Syria, one of the wryly positive aspects of the United States' being mired in Iraq is that it is increasingly unlikely that American sabre-rattling toward both countries would be followed by any concrete action. There are not enough US troops to embark on such adventures.

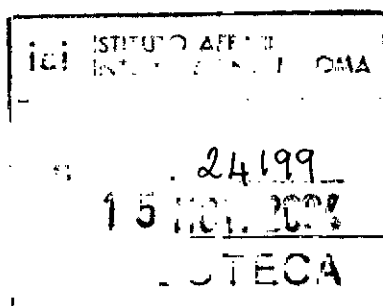
An important part of the neo-conservative vision of the future was to reduce American dependence on Saudi Arabia, which the events of 11 September 2001 seemed to make an ever more urgent priority. However, soaring world demand for oil (from China and elsewhere) and the Saudis' abundant possession of it, means that the dependence is unlikely to diminish any time in the near future. The Saudi government, perhaps somewhat more rattled than usual, has responded to the latest series of

not wanting to go down in history as the person who signed the agreement formalising the handover of Palestinian territory to Israel. In fairness, Ross does not present the Israelis as paragons of virtue either.

crises by announcing a series of more or less sclerotic steps towards democratisation which are unlikely to lead to earth-shattering results; a spate of bombings directed largely against expatriate workers earlier this year has probably led to heightened security but to no other fundamental changes. Like its other neighbours, Saudi Arabia is naturally fearful of the consequences of anarchy in Iraq, but its rulers know that they are too important to the United States to remain undefended in a major crisis. As has been mentioned earlier, if democracy were ever to make any headway in Iraq, this would be a considerable embarrassment to the Saudis, but it is also the case that there is no obvious alternative, no coherent or organised opposition, to the ruling family. If he remains in place after November 2 Mt Wolfowitz will have to continue to be patient.

In broad and general terms, the disaster in Iraq, and the United States' failure to design, or to execute, a meaningful post-conquest strategy, has seriously damaged its standing in the region and elsewhere. Although I can only offer anecdotal evidence based on visits in June 2004 and in 2003, hostility to the United States seems to have reached unprecedented heights. When I backed the invasion in the Spring of 2003, I thought it inconceivable that failure could even be contemplated; this was the US' great opportunity to democratise Iraq, and following on from that, the rest of the region – how could not only fail but so widely be seen to fail ?

As I said before, I am a historian, not a political scientist, which means I am more comfortable trying to understand or explain the past rather than suggest feasible ways forward. But, for what it is worth, I think that the only step forward which could be taken would be for Europe, with or without the United Kingdom, to part company more definitively with the United States, and to piece together a viable common strategy, to develop an alternative policy for the social, economic and political reconstruction of Iraq. It would represent a major act of political courage, but also great political realism, on Mr Blair's part if he were to rejoin most of the rest of Europe. However convinced he may be about the rightness of the initial action and its success in putting an end to the dictatorship, it is hard to imagine that he is equally comfortable with the 'administration of the peace' as it has manifested itself over the last eighteen months. Some way out of the quagmire must be found, some new and broader vision of what it will take to bring peace, security and justice to this profoundly traumatized part of the world. I do not know whether the structure of the European Community would make such a departure possible, but I cannot see even the slightest glimmer of hope in any of the other courses of action being pursued at the moment.



International Conference

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Rome, 8-9 October 2004

YEZID SAYIGH

**“Prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace process,
and for EU/US contribution”**

The central argument of this paper is that the most likely prospect for Israel and Palestine is a continuing and long-term situation of no-peace, with attendant violence of varying form and intensity. This perspective may be disproved if any of the three main actors – the Government of Israel (GoI), Palestinian Authority (PA), or US Administration – undertakes a fundamental shift in political strategy, but this appears unlikely in the foreseeable future. Conceivably, a Palestinian leadership keen on ensuring its survival and on salvaging some hope of statehood might accept an Israeli offer entailing less than the Barak offer and Clinton parameters of 2000, but a peace treaty on this basis would probably not be durable, and it is moreover improbable that a government led by Ariel Sharon or his most likely successors would make even a minimally tempting offer. Given the evident unwillingness of the US and the EU to invest the scope and scale of political and material resources that would be needed to shift the cost-benefit calculations of the two principal protagonists and alter the incentive structures of conflict-versus-peace for their main leaderships and publics, it is therefore very unlikely that either external actor, nor the international community more generally, will be able to make a significant impact on the dynamics and path of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rather, they will at best maintain their current ‘holding pattern’, of political and financial assistance designed to prevent the status quo from further regression, although the situation is not in fact static and such a passive policy will come under constant strain from new developments and emerging trends on the ground.

Opinion polls continue to show that a majority of Israelis and Palestinians remain supportive not only of a two-state solution, but also of making the necessary concessions so long as they can be assured of genuine peace and security in return. Yet, for a number of reasons this has not translated into convergent political strategies and security practices by the incumbent leaderships on both sides, nor, in all probability, will it in the short-to-medium term in all probability. This is due in large measure to the manner in which politics within each society, and relations between

the two sides, have become restructured over the past four years of conflict. New, disintegrative dynamics have entered the picture as a result, and new political, economic, and social realities have also evolved on both sides – at times influenced by, if not emanating from, factors and trends unrelated to the conflict. Factors that might prompt peace-making – such as war-weariness on both sides – are therefore counter-balanced constantly. The divergence between majority public opinion and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians on the one hand, and the political and security calculus and behaviour their leaders and main parties on the other hand, is moreover explained by the often negative impact of changes in the international environment, not least the 9/11 attacks and the consequent reframing of international security in terms of a global war on terrorism.

A Task of Sisyphus

The structure of conflict as it has evolved over the past four years has produced a number of trends and dynamics that now have a reality of their own, and that will shape both conflict and peace-making in the foreseeable future. It consists of a number of factors. One of these is the physical fragmentation of the Palestinian territories through the overlapping grids of checkpoints, military bases and perimeters, 'bypass' roads linking these and Israeli settlements, the newly-constructed security barrier. Coupled with the severe restriction of the movement of Palestinian persons and goods – within the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS), into East Jerusalem or Israel, or to and from the outside world – the result is a far-reaching ghetto-ization effect. This is reflected not only in instilling a siege mentality or in accelerating the collapse of the PA and its various civilian and police agencies, but also in the atomization of the Palestinian economy and the emergence of local, subsistence-focused mini-economies.

Clearly, the long-term damage to the economy, and to the viability of the battered private sector, is serious. This is compounded by emigration of the professional and middle classes, about which there is little hard data but may safely be assumed to be occurring. Even less visible is the damage to the Palestinian social fabric, though

increasing evidence of sharp rises in domestic violence and reports from mental health agencies indicates the effects of brutalization and unemployment, which are likely to be long-term as well. (Children exposed to the violence of the first intifada formed the hard core of the armed militants in the second one, and this cycle is likely to be repeated in the years to come.)

Among the short- and medium-term consequences are growing signs that the nationalist dimension of the conflict against Israel is gaining an additional class character, as the more marked weariness with the continuing intifada and closures occurs among the middle class, whereas most of the armed militants (of all persuasions, whether Fateh or Hamas) come from sectors of the urban poor or refugee camps. Class is moreover overlaid by criminality, as paramilitaries who have lost their livelihood due to unemployment or to the loss of unreported salaries from the PA and its President Yaser Arafat turn increasingly to extortion or other criminal activity.

These trends may slow down, especially if Israel relaxes some of its controls. However, the extensive and multi-layered system of Israeli security, administrative, and economic control is now firmly in place and will not be dismantled, even if its relaxed. At present, the impact of this system on Palestinian administration, economy, and society is severe, producing effects and symptoms that characterize failed states. Elsewhere this might trigger international intervention, but in Palestine the political restrictions on external involvement mean that international involvement acts effectively as a palliative. European (and Arab) financial assistance enables the PA to continue to pay the salaries of some 140,000 persons and thus avoid economic meltdown in a society already suffering a 40 percent drop in GDP since 2000 and unemployment rates of 40-60 percent in the WB and GS respectively. The international community (and not least the EU) quietly acknowledges that it has no political options and that the Quartet's 'roadmap' is stillborn, but so far has preferred not to withdraw its financial support, in the interest of shoring up the political and territorial status quo and lest withdrawal trigger a total economic and social collapse. This leaves it underwriting the Israeli occupation in effect, unable to influence Israeli

security policy or even to impede settlement activity in any meaningful way, yet unable and unwilling to intervene as forcefully as is necessary in order to alter fundamentally the structure of conflict and reopen opportunities for resumption both normal civilian life and trade in the WBGS and of genuine peace talks.

A further, strategic implication is that the obstacles to Israeli settlement in the WBGS have been severely, perhaps fatally, reduced. The international political and legal consensus established after June 1967 – describing both settlement and the wider acquisition of territory by force as illegal – was effectively superseded by the Oslo Accords, and will not be revived if, or when, the latter are finally recognized as dead. A second main obstacle, and a key element of the international consensus, is the US position specifically, which has shifted over time from describing settlements plainly as illegal, through 'unhelpful', to finally making US opposition to them contingent solely on Palestinian action against terrorism. The third and last obstacle was the emergence of a viable, unitary Palestinian national movement, embodied in the PLO until 1993 and since then in the PA, but this is on the verge of institutional collapse and of a long-overdue generational change, and appears wholly powerless to act coherently or effectively against Israeli settlement activity, both in the WBGS generally and in East Jerusalem in particular, where the Israeli security barrier is most seriously entrenched. The Israeli nationalist Right might well be able to claim the final historic triumph of Zionism in settling the whole of mandate Palestine.

This is not to say that such victory is assured or unchallenged. Nor is it the result, specifically, of the Israeli control system that has been put into place. Hypothetically, any and all elements of this system, whether physical or procedural, can be dismantled and their effects undone and negated. However, none of the actors that might challenge Israeli predominance in the field or resist the proclivity of Israel's incumbent leaders to deepen its grip on the WBGS (including East Jerusalem) are likely to do so: the Palestinians are undergoing a fundamental transition of political leaderships, generations, and institutions, the outcome of which is highly uncertain and may take years (a generation, in practical terms 10-15 years) to crystallize; the Israeli peace camp remains on the defensive and is unlikely to regain the initiative so

long as the present, degenerative nature of the conflict persists; and the international community is over-stretched and over-burdened already, not least in Iraq, and is unlikely to confront either the GoI or the US Administration as and when this is necessary in order to reassert the parameters that would permit Palestinian compliance and durable peace, namely viable statehood in contiguous territory, with sovereignty in East Jerusalem and a reasonable resolution of the refugee problem. In the absence of such an outcome, the status quo will harden into a new physical and political reality, one of two populations inhabiting the same territory yet living under two, radically divergent legal, administrative, and security systems and with hugely different access to land, water, the outside world, and economic resources and opportunity.

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PAPER BY

FRED TANNER

**“Defence cooperation and democratisation. NATO role towards
the Broader Middle East and the Mediterranean”**

Introduction

Today, NATO has multiple identities in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern region. Multiple identities are not a good recipe for policy coherence. One identity can be found under the auspices of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, where the Atlantic Alliance appears as a partner for defence cooperation promoting soft security arrangements in the region. But, since 9/11, NATO is also present in the same region with the task force 'Active Endeavour' as a military response to threats of Islamic terrorism.

Moreover, the engagement of NATO in the Mediterranean has gained a third dimension with the invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition, because some 15 NATO member countries have contributed to the coalition forces in Iraq, most prominently the UK and Poland. Furthermore, NATO, after its inability to accept the US request to take up a formal role in Iraq, did assume the responsibility to train the Iraqi army and security personnel.

Finally, NATO jumped on the bandwagon of democracy promotion with the Istanbul Initiatives which are elements of broader plans for the Middle East such as the US Middle East Initiative of 2003, the 2004 US-European and G8- Summits. This promotion of democratic values and norms is a difficult task because of the status-quo orientation of the ruling elites in the Arab world and the Islamist threats to counteract any efforts of liberalisation.

The question this paper addresses is to what extent NATO can act as a forum and driver for the promotion of defence reform and democratisation in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. For this purpose, the paper will examine NATO's track record in this field and then explore how transatlantic relations today condition NATO's policy towards the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. The study will then briefly examine the obstacles to such cooperation before it looks at where NATO can act and where such collaboration may have a chance to advance NATO's liberal agenda in the region.

NATO, Defence Cooperation and Democratization

The notion of defence cooperation can cover a broad spectrum of bilateral or multilateral measures ranging from defence assistance and arms transfers to cooperation in the field of reform and modernisation of the armed forces. The notion of defence cooperation is taken here in its broadest

sense, to also include cooperation in the field of internal security or law enforcement, for example to combat trafficking or terrorism.

What is NATO's relationship with democratisation? NATO's tradition of democratic governance is recent as it has its origins at the end of the Cold War. NATO's transformation of the 1990s was based on liberal principles. The London Declaration of 1990 states that NATO could "help build the structures of a more united continent, supporting security and stability with the strength of our shared faith in democracy, the rights of the individual and the peaceful resolution of disputes"¹.

Transformational and liberal ideas of the 1990s were driven primarily by the US in view of NATO's eastward enlargement. This approach took a programmatic shape in 1994 with the Partnership for Peace (PfP) that was to pull former Warsaw Pact enemies into NATO's collaborative orbit. The externalisation of democratic requirements was codified in the PfP Framework Document and the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The measures to promote democratisation included defence reform, democratic control of armed forces, defence education, but also actions related to the human security agenda such as cooperation on small arms and light weapons (SALW), mine action, and human rights training of security forces. The enlargement of NATO to 26 countries in 2004 has, through the spin-off effects of the MAP also strengthened the governance component of those countries that are associated with NATO through PfP and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. At the Istanbul Summit of 2004, the Council endorsed a Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building, which is underpinned by the belief that defence institutions should be subordinate to civilian and democratic mechanisms. One could argue that shared liberal democratic values and norms are at the heart of today's NATO's legitimacy. It is on the basis of this common identity "that NATO in the post-Cold War period has turned to focus on democracy promotion as a core principle for its activities"².

The unique character of NATO lies in the ability to combine robust, military operations with soft power to assist countries in transforming their security and defence sectors. The notion of soft power includes a large spectrum of cooperative activities through which partner states are engaged, such as the promotion of interoperability, security governance, defence reforms and other activities aimed at strengthening civil-military partnerships. Institutional frameworks for soft security cooperation include

¹ See also Webber, Mark et al. "The Governance of European Security", *Review of International Studies*. 2004, 30, pg 9-19.

² Sjursen, Helene. "On the Identity of NATO." *International Affairs*. 80.4. 2004, pg 689.

the Partnership for Peace and the Mediterranean Dialogue, which was elevated at the Istanbul Summit to a 'Partnership'.

These 'soft power' activities are becoming ever more important to NATO, particularly with regard to the increasing efforts to promote governance and democratic reform in countries adjacent to NATO. NATO's MAP has also acquired the status of a normative reference for countries outside the enlarged NATO, particularly for countries in the Balkans, the Ukraine and possibly also for countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Transatlantic Bargain over Democracy Promotion in the Middle East

US-European Convergence and Disputes

NATO's continuous transformation towards becoming a liberal value-based international security actor is very much a function of a transatlantic bargain on democracy promotion. This bargain exists as far as the centrality of liberal values in world affairs is concerned. It includes the transatlantic agreement that democracy promotion should be pursued in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. But, at present this common liberal philosophy is eroded by different world views, different threat perceptions and different policies. As the US now concentrates on global questions, it no longer sees Europe as a region of strategic interest. Europe, in turn, focuses on its wider neighbourhood. For Europeans, the construction of a liberal and civil European model, multilateralism and international law are constants and imperatives in their international conduct. For the US, the "support for universal rules of behaviour really is a matter of idealism"³ The transatlantic difference over values and rule of law was first epitomised in the dispute over the International Criminal Court and then over Iraq.

With regard to the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Europe sees the need of democratisation in the region as a corollary to its mainstream policies of development assistance and economic as well as political partnership building. Moreover, the EU sees its programmes for the promotion of reforms in the Middle East as complementary, but independent of those of the US⁴.

The US has a much more direct and "can-do" perspective of democratisation in the Middle East. Ever since 9/11 the Bush administration's pursuit has been a "Forward Strategy of Freedom" that has led to

3 Kagan, Robert. "Power and Weakness." *Policy Review*. 113. June/July 2002.

4 Volker, Perthes. "Bewegung im Mittleren Osten." *SWP-Studie*. September 2004, pg 23.

the Greater Middle East Initiative⁵. It can be argued that the objective of democracy promotion has received a major boost and become much more salient with the current war on terror, at least as far as the Middle East is concerned. Also the Bush administration seems to acknowledge that one main 'root cause' of Islamic terrorism is the lack of democracy and exclusionary policies in the region, and that fighting Islamic terrorism also requires promoting democratic governance in Arab countries. The various US initiatives in the region reflect this understanding: the 2003 Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the US-led "Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Broader Middle East and North Africa" adopted in the context of the 2004 G-8 Summit and the Istanbul Summit Initiatives all propose cooperation with a view towards political, economic and social reforms in the wider Middle East and the Mediterranean.

NATO and the Middle East

With regard to NATO, President Bush's vision of the organisations 21st-century responsibilities are about "fighting terrorism and promoting democratic values"⁶. But, NATO is unlikely to serve as a forum for a common US-European approach to reforms in the Middle East because of its multiple identities and the resulting lack of a common strategy. There is a distinct US-European difference of view and policy with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iraq war. Brzezinski argues rightly that Europeans suspect the sudden US focus on democracy to be promoted by US administration officials "who wish to delay any serious American effort to push the Israeli and Palestinians to reach a genuine peace settlement"⁷.

From a geographical or regional perspective there exists today, however, an informal consensus within the Atlantic Alliance that NATO as a regional organisation has to think globally in order to survive in the new security environment. The Istanbul Summit has clearly shown that, henceforth, NATO's 'out of area' debate is over.

With the most recent round of enlargement, the Cold War 'Eastern border' has all but disappeared. Instead, the US has been pushing for NATO to get involved in the Middle East, both militarily and in terms of partnership building. The US Ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns argued that NATO's

⁵ For a survey on the evolution of thinking about democracy in US Foreign Policy towards the Middle East, see Neep, Daniel. "Dilemmas of Democratization in the Middle East: The 'Forward Strategy of Freedom'. *Middle East Policy*. IX.3. Fall 2004.

⁶ "NATO Affords Gains for U.S. Foreign." *The Washington File. Security Policy*. 30 June 2004.

⁷ Brzezinski, Zbigniew, "How Not to Spread Democracy." *International Herald Tribune*. 9 March 2004.

mandate to defend Europe and North America can only be achieved by deploying “our conceptual attention and our military forces east and south. NATO’s future, we believe is east and is south. It’s in the Greater Middle East”⁸.

Disputes over Iraq

With regard to Iraq, there was no shared NATO position at any stage during the crisis. Indeed, as a political or military alliance, NATO was almost irrelevant both during the pre-war period and during the war itself. NATO’s paralysis almost turned lethal with the short but intensive controversy over Turkey’s request to NATO to assist in the strengthening of Turkey’s defensive capabilities against potential retaliatory strikes by Iraq in case of a US attack. The failure of NATO to initially support Turkey with defensive means has led to widespread warnings of ‘the end of NATO’⁹.

Some members, in particular the US, wanted NATO to play a primary role subsequent to the transfer of sovereignty on 30th June, 2004. They have drawn attention to the fact that 16 NATO member countries were already in Iraq as members of the coalition forces. Other members, however, remained ambivalent or non-committal¹⁰.

The positions of other NATO members have been largely defined in relation to that of the US. Poland and the UK already have a significant role in Iraq¹¹. At the same time, the aftershocks of certain ideological differences continue to affect discussions over UN involvement, and therefore any involvement of NATO troops. For example, the UK emphasises the need for a multilateral approach, while the US remains reluctant to give a central role to the UN.¹²

Spain had one of the largest troop contingents in Iraq, but with the defeat of the Aznar government by the Socialists, the new Spanish government withdrew its troops from Iraq. The new Prime Minister Zapatero stated that “the only viable form of occupation would be for the UN to take political control, for more multinational forces including many Arab countries led by the Arab League to be involved”¹³.

⁸Burns, Nicholas R. “The New NATO and the Greater Middle East.” Remarks at Conference on NATO and the Greater Middle East, Prague. 19 October 2003.

⁹ See, for instance, “The End of NATO.” *The Wall Street Journal*. 10 February 2003.

¹⁰ Chalmers, John. “Divisions on Iraq cloud NATO’s enlargement party.” *Reuters*, 3 April 2003.

¹¹ When Poland assumed command of the Multinational Division in the south of Iraq as part of the international stabilisation force, NATO supported the mission with tasks such as providing intelligence, logistics expertise, movement co-ordination, force generation and secure communications support. This support function did not, however, provide NATO with a presence in Iraq.

¹² Hoon, Geoffrey. Speech at the 40th Munich Conference on Security Policy. 7 February 2004.

¹³ Cawthorne, Andrew and Daniel Trotta. “Spain’s Zapatero: Iraq Pull-Out Looks Inevitable.” *Reuters*. 21 March 2004.

Last, but not least, there are the perspectives of France and Germany. From a political point of view, France has consistently insisted on an enhanced role for the UN¹⁴, given the fact that the Bush Administration did pursue a policy of selective multilateralism from the very outset. Also, France re-asserted that NATO was "simply not the right place" for decisions on Iraq once sovereignty is returned by its occupying powers¹⁵. Germany has sought to draw attention beyond NATO to the wider social and cultural issues: the 'causes of terrorism', and the cultural and ideological context in which 'jihadist terrorism' is possible¹⁶. Moreover, the German government has expressed concern that NATO involvement in Iraq would overstretch its troops and resources, given that commitments already exist in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and the fight against 'terrorism'. The conflicting perspectives of NATO countries, as described in this section, were only superficially addressed at the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul. The main deficit of NATO remains a shared strategic vision of all partners.

Obstacles for security governance in the region

The Greater Mediterranean is one of the regions in the world with the largest democratic deficit¹⁷. There are multiple reasons for this, ranging from underdevelopment, the difficult colonial heritage, the presence of authoritarian regimes and an excessive but partially understandable bias for internal stability and external mistrust. Moreover, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Iraq are often used as a pretext by Arab governments for not engaging in democratic reform. But there are other reasons for the difficulties to promote democratic governance in the security sector¹⁸.

The first obstacle is the intimate and opaque relationship between the security sector and ruling elite in most Southern Mediterranean states. This intimacy is based on shared interests in maintaining power, but also on economic accommodations. In many countries "the military has its own sources of revenue for which it is not accountable and is under no observable political pressure either better to utilize its capital or to divest itself of enterprises, as is the case with regard to the civilian public sector"¹⁹.

¹⁴ Recent reports suggest that France would require the UN to have "responsibility for all operations". "No NATO role before UN in charge – France." *Reuters*. 6 April 2004.

¹⁵ See ft 11.

¹⁶ Fischer, Joschka. Speech at the 40th Munich Conference on Security Policy. 7 February 2004.

¹⁷ "Freedom calls, at last? *The Economist*. 3 April 2004, pg.

¹⁸ For an in-depth analysis of the democracy deficit, Western and Arab concepts of democracy and human rights, see Aliboni, R. "Common Languages in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership", Euromesco Papers. Paper 31. May 2004.

¹⁹ Springborg, R. "Military Elites and the Polity in Arab States." *Development Associates*. Occasional Paper. No 2. Arlington, Virginia. 1998, pg 6.

Second, on a more conceptual level, the compatibility between Islam and democratic governance is questioned by some analysts²⁰. They typically point both to the absence of liberal/individualistic ideas in Islam as a religious and political doctrine, as well as to the lack of a tradition of democratic governance in Arab countries. Less categorical arguments within this debate suggest that Arab countries could achieve some form of democratic governance, but not necessarily a 'western-style' democracy but rather some other form of democracy.²¹

A third obstacle is the apparent double standards when Western states favour 'stable' regimes in the region even if these are undemocratic, over 'unstable' but potentially more democratic regimes. This is particularly the case, when 'instability' in the countries of the region could have spill-over effects on the territory of EU countries, in the form for instance of large scale refugee flows. European countries' policies towards Algeria after 1992 provide clear evidence of their preference for 'stable' regimes even if these lack democratic legitimacy. .

Fourth, there is widespread belief in the Arab population that the objective behind the US use of force in Iraq is to secure access to oil supplies. Bechir Chourou argues that this belief undermines US "declarations to the effect that the US is interested in promoting universal values (democracy), protecting humanity against universal evils (terrorism), insuring 'civilised' and responsible behaviours (respect of international law), or helping the downtrodden (Middle East Partnership or MEPI) are insincere and unconvincing attempts to justify wrongful actions".²²

A final obstacle to democracy promotion is the Western 'war on international terrorism'. Here, the argument states that all that matters is to be a reliable ally in the struggle against terrorism, consequently respect for principles of democratic governance has become increasingly irrelevant. Thus, countries or regimes which used to be shunned by the West for undemocratic behaviour are now embraced as important allies in the fight against terror²³.

What can be done?

²⁰ Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong with Islam?* Perennial. 2003.

²¹ I gratefully acknowledge the help of Derek Lutterbeck in this section.

²² Chourou, Bechir. A Southern Perspective on Mediterranean Security After 9/11." Mimeo. 4 October 2004.

²³ Carothers, Thomas. "Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror." *Foreign Affairs*. January/February 2003.

The section above has shown that reforms in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern region are difficult to achieve, particularly in an environment of protracted and deadly violence. But, as the Egyptian example (peace agreement with Israel in 1978) has shown, the prospects for reform may not improve after a successful peace agreement. In fact, western countries have made no serious efforts to promote good governance of the security sector in the partner countries in the South because they knew that this would be unacceptable for the ruling elites, although exceptions to this rule exist in the region, for example Turkey and the Palestinian Authority.

NATO's engagement in the region in the past years has been limited to very soft cooperation in the context of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD). In the context of MD, NATO has established bilateral action plans with each partner state. The menu is very rich, but the consumers are also very choosy. The first few years and up to 9/11, the MD was basically irrelevant with regard to regional security or defence reforms of partner states. The only interesting development has been—outside the MD framework—the agreement of some Arab partner states to join NATO-led operations in the Balkan, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IFOR/SFOR) and Kosovo (KFOR). Moreover, Jordan joined the US-led operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (see annex).

After 9/11, the 2002 Prague Summit endorsed the document “Upgrading the Mediterranean Dialogue including an inventory of possible areas of cooperation”. This “Enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue” moved from purely bilateral (19+1, then 26+1) information exchange meetings in Brussels to a more programmatic approach that also led to meetings with all 7 partner countries at various levels of representation. In addition to information exchange, to date very little has been achieved or if there has been some achievement, NATO kept it confidential in order not to ‘embarrass’ partner states.

The Istanbul Summit Initiatives

At the Istanbul Summit, NATO agreed to three ‘soft power’ initiatives in order to assume a greater presence in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The first is an effort –which falls far short of a “Greater Middle East Initiative” –to deepen the existing **Mediterranean Dialogue (MD)** with seven countries in North Africa and the Middle East, and to transform it into a genuine ‘Partnership’. It is not yet clear what the ‘deepening’ should entail, particularly in view of the sombre mood of some Arab states regarding the US force presence in Iraq. Formally, the objectives of the Partnership are dialogue, interoperability, defence reform, and the fight against terrorism. For the first time—for some NATO

officials possibly prematurely—the MD calls for “promoting democratic control of armed forces and facilitating transparency in national defence planning and defence budgeting in support of defence reform”²⁴. This is one of seven ‘priority areas’ that should support the following objectives of collaboration: enhancing the existing political dialogue; achieving interoperability; developing defence reform; and contributing to the fight against terrorism.

According to a NATO document published before the summit, the “deepening” of the MD should be based on the following principles:

- The need to take forward the process in close consultation with MD countries.
- The possibility of self-differentiation, while preserving its non-discriminatory character;
- Ensure complementarity with the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and
- Possibility of expanding MD to other interested countries in the Mediterranean region on a case-by-case basis²⁵.

The second is the “**Istanbul Cooperation Initiative**”. With this initiative NATO reaches out for the first time to Gulf states (‘broader Middle East region’). The somewhat surprising aspect of the ICI is that—perhaps because it is a PfP template—that it contains, an explicit language on security governance. There is, however, no formal institutional link to PfP.

According to the North Atlantic Council, 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 [and] fighting terrorism [...] ²⁶. The objective of the ICI is “to develop the ability of countries” forces to operate with those of the Alliance including by contributing to NATO-led operations, the fight against terrorism, stemming the flow of WMD materials and illegal trafficking in arms, and improve countries’ capabilities to address common challenges and threats with NATO²⁷.

²⁴ NATO Policy Document. “A more Ambitious and Expanded Framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue.” 9 July 2004.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Quoted in, Polaris. Special Issue. *NATO School*. 7 August 2004, pg 12.

²⁷ The suggested work programmes includes one on NATO-sponsored border security; access to appropriate PfP programmes and training centres, promoting cooperation in the areas of civil emergency planning, offer NATO training courses on civil emergency planning, civil-military coordination, and crisis response to maritime, aviation, and surface threats; invitations to join or observe relevant NATO/PfP exercises as appropriate and provision of information on possible disaster assistance.

In order to avoid any political problems from emerging as part of this initiative, NATO stipulates a number of caveats. First, NATO makes clear that this new Initiative could not be instrumentalised by the new partners in view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the US-led coalition in Iraq. For this purpose, the NATO text stipulates that the Initiative cannot “be used to create a political debate over issues more appropriately handled in other fora”. Second, in order to avoid Arab ‘no-shows’ to Initiative events where Israel may also be present, the new Partnership will function on the a 26+1 basis, that is the 26 NATO members will work with each country on an ‘one-to-one’ or individual basis.

The third offer of NATO was the training of the **new Iraqi army**. At the 2004 G8 Summit at Sea Island, France opposed any NATO commitment that would endorse the military presence of US forces in Iraq. Also, French President Jacques Chirac was concerned that a NATO involvement in Iraq would tarnish the image of the organisation in the Arab world at large. This is why France agreed to the plan of training Iraqi soldiers only with the proviso that this would be done outside the country. France had to drop this red-line requirement later under pressure from allies. But, it continued to stonewall progress of the so-called NATO Training Implementation Mission in Iraq (NTIM-I) by opposing the creation of a NATO training academy in Iraq with the arguments that its costs should be covered by those NATO allies only who are part of the US-led coalition²⁸.

The NATO training activities should cover the following subject areas: in-theatre briefings, interoperability, peace support operations, civil-military cooperation, NATO Operation Planning Procedures and NATO Public Information Procedures, Intelligence, military medical operations, civil protection and roles of international organizations and NGOs.²⁹

“Developing a ‘Dense Web of Cooperative Offers’ ”

With the Istanbul Initiatives for MD and ICI, today, the institutional conditions exist to conduct regular political and military dialogue and to engage in a “dense web of cooperative offers on many levels based on the proven PfP principle of self-differentiation”³⁰. Nevertheless, recalling the above mentioned obstacles, the success of future defence cooperation in the context of the Istanbul framework

²⁸ “France and Belgium Block NATO Iraq Training Plan.” *Financial Times*. 18-19 September 2004.

²⁹ Polairs, pg 18.

³⁰ Donnelly, Chris. “Forging a NATO partnership for the Greater Middle East.” Istanbul Summit Special. *NATO Review*. 2004, pg 28.

depends on the political will and added security values and other benefits that both NATO members and MD/ICI partners will get from such cooperation. For NATO, the main challenges are its persistent Cold War image of an instrument of Western intervention, the lack of resources and the conflicting national agendas of member states.

Whereas, information sharing and partnership building could overcome NATO's negative image in the mid- to long-term, the lack of resources (including equipment) are a more serious concern, because this depends primarily on national sponsors of NATO and other EAPC countries. The problem for NATO planners is the fact that both individual NATO members and MD partner states may have intensive bilateral cooperation programmes on a host of activities, ranging from training, military exercises, all the way to arms sales and defence agreements³¹. The transfer of the soft part of such bilateral cooperation into the multilateral framework of NATO MD is not easily done. NATO member states may feel that their national agenda would be watered down on a NATO level, whereas MD partner states prefer bilateral cooperation for political and practical reasons.

The MD also comprises a number of functional activities or instruments that have no political strings attached and that —over time—can lead to more confidence and therefore more security in the region. Such activities include visits, observation of military exercises, training both in the NATO schools and in partner countries (mobile training teams), and engagement in the NATO Science Programme, Humanitarian Mine Awareness operations and civil emergency planning.³² The programme also includes port visits to MD countries by the NATO Standing Naval Forces. In view of the increasing threat of terrorism in the partner region, the mutual interest in defence cooperation is shifting towards practical measures in the areas of border control and small arms management. Jordan, for instance has been seeking NATO support in its attempt to better secure the border with Iraq. The border security project is aimed at preventing the smuggling of weapons and explosives from Iraq to Jordan. The assumption is that some of these explosives could make their way to the Occupied Territories for suicide attacks. NATO has, however, problems to meet Jordan's demand for training and equipment and it has to fall back on the support of individual member states.

³¹ France, for instance has bilateral military cooperation agreements with most MD countries. These agreements usually comprise three elements: training, transfer of military equipment and joint exercises. Spain has a special bilateral relationship with Morocco, whereas the US has a strategic relationship with Israel and close military cooperation with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco.

³² The mobile training teams have been delivering modules to MD partners on diverse topics such as civil-military relations, public information policies and military medical issues.

In contrast to the PfP, the carrot of NATO membership cannot be used with MD/ICI states. This is why proposed activities should be attractive for the partner state without appearing intrusive. Moreover, the normative side of defence cooperation and democratisation will have to remain on the back burner. This means that it is too early to provide the partner states with a 'Mediterranean Partnership Framework Agreement' similar to that of the 1994 PfP Framework Agreement. In view of the "non-discriminatory" clause that is inherent to the MD process, a Framework Agreement would have to be agreed by all partners of the MD, a requirement difficult to meet today. This situation is reminiscent to the EU's futile efforts to promote a 'Charter for Peace and Security in the Mediterranean' in the context of the Barcelona Process. Southern partners will continue to shy away from formal arrangements in the field of security governance and democracy. This is why the 'progressive and individual' provisos of the Istanbul summit are currently the most pragmatic formula for NATO's security and defence cooperation in the region. There remains hope, that one or another MD country may –under a courageous leadership–begin to embrace the process of democratisation of the security sector. Progress in this domain, as timid as it may be—should be supported with substantial positive inducements from the North. But, because NATO is not able to provide economic incentives, it will be imperative to develop programmes with other organisations, including the EU and the World Bank. Only a combined soft security, political and economic approach can help countries in transition to engage in a sustained process of reform and democratisation.

Conclusion

The promotion of reforms and democratisation in the Mediterranean and Middle East is today as necessary for security-building as it is difficult to achieve. This paper has tried to show that defence cooperation and democratisation efforts of NATO are not just running into resistance from the Southern partner states. One of the most important obstacles lies in the transatlantic disagreement over style and finality of democracy promotion in the Middle East. Added to this is the 'systemic' problem of implicit rivalry between national programmes of NATO states with MD partners and NATO's current efforts to achieve a more significant cooperation agenda in its multilateral track. The lack of empowerment of NATO may keep security governance off the agenda in NATO-MD partner relations because the bilateral partnership programmes do not contain any activities that are dedicated to democratic reform in the security sector. In this context it is important to remember that NATO is an intergovernmental organisation with 26 member states that all may have different perspectives, interests and policy agendas with regards to the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The promotion of defence reform and democratisation would need a common alliance strategy, not just an agreement about a few measures. NATO as an intergovernmental organisation has great difficulties to act as a driver in the governance area. This is in contrast to the EU, where the Commission often appears as an *avant garde* for the promotion of liberal policies. Also, the EU has, in its security strategy, explicitly recognised the link between democratic governance in the security sector and institution-building outside the EU area.³³ A closer cooperation between NATO and the EU will become inevitable, as defence reform can only be carried out in a sound environment of sustainable development.

NATO's chances to advance a liberal agenda in the context of defence cooperation are not very good as long as the Israeli-Palestinian and Iraqi conflicts are not addressed in a coherent and credible way. There is a need to reengage in the Middle East process after the US elections. The influence of NATO with regard to Israeli-Palestinian conflict management may be minimal, because NATO is—in contrast to the EU—not a member of the Road Map Contact Group. Chris Donnelly argues, however, that NATO could, provided its ISAF force succeeds in stabilising Afghanistan, play the “honest broker” in the Near East that could “help negotiate and then enforce a sophisticated security package.”³⁴

Finally, this paper argued that collaborative projects in the context of the MD/ICI frameworks need to be attractive to the partners without appearing intrusive. Indeed, reform and democratisation efforts will not work with MD states if there is no clear ownership of the states in the South. Mohamed Kadry Said argues that “the Alliance must seek to develop a two-way relationship with Arab countries and also to address their security concerns”³⁵. Given the democratic deficit in the region, however, the security concerns of the governments may not be congruent with those of their societies.

³³ The EU Security Strategy Paper states: “As we increase capabilities in the different areas, we should think in terms of a wider spectrum of missions. This might include Security sector reform. The last of these would be part of broader institution-building.”

³⁴ Donnelly, pg 26.

³⁵ Said, Mohamed Kadry. *NATO Review*. 1, 2004.

Annex

Morocco

- participation in IFOR/SFOR, about 350 troops
- participation in KFOR, about 350 troops

Egypt

- (planned) participation in IFOR/SFOR is mentioned in some documents (without indication of number of troops) but *not on official NATO website*
- two personnel deployed at US CENTCOM in Operation Enduring Freedom

Jordan

- participation in IFOR/SFOR is mentioned in some documents (without indication of number of troops).
- Jordanian Special Operations Forces deployed as translators and assistant instructors in Yemen in support of US operations in Yemen. Jordan maintains 20 SOF in Yemen in that capacity
- support to Operation Enduring Freedom: There are currently two Jordanian representatives supporting CENTCOM in OEF. Moreover, Special Operations Battalion of 480 personnel deployed to Mezar-e-Sharif (MES) with an Engineer Platoon and medical unit in Dec 2001. Currently, 150 Jordanian SOF are deployed in MES to provide security to Jordanian hospital in MES.

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