
Europe and the Middle East
perspectives on Major Policy Issues



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Introduction: Ambassador Mark Franco

■ *Head of European Union Delegation to Egypt* ■

The idea for this special edition stems from the perception that the Middle East and Europe are natural regional partners brought together out of recognition of mutual strategic concerns and proximity, yet have unfulfilled reciprocal expectations over the direction the partnership ought to take. The EU has over the years unravelled a series of policy frameworks for embracing its southern Mediterranean flank, born out of its own experiences at forming a political and economic intra-national entity of unparalleled levels of consensus and coordination. The 1995 Barcelona Declaration heralded the first concerted action to bring together the EU Member States and the countries of ‘the South’ in a partnership – the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership – based on a set of agreed principles on security, economic interdependence, democracy and civil society.

The swelling of the ranks of the EU from 15 to 27 Member States extended the frontiers of the Union, and prompted a fresh approach to building the elements of security, economic prosperity and like-mindedness among the countries bordering the newly enlarged EU. Thus emerged in 2004 the European Neighbourhood Policy, inspired by the successes of enlargement, seeking to spread the fruits of trade, the internal market and legislative approximation with countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucuses, and the traditional ‘Barcelona’ partners of the Middle East and North Africa, each with its own individually tailored negotiated Action Plan to set the pace and level of ambition for developing the bilateral partnership.

The most recent political initiative is the Union for the Mediterranean, launched in 2008 to promote regional integration and investments through the pursuit of practical, achievable projects in transport, energy, water, environment, education and commerce. The new grouping, with the innovation of shared co-presidencies between the EU and its southern and

eastern partners, has been slow in taking off, but the Secretariat is taking shape, nurtured by EU financial and political backing, as well as that of partners. No one is blind to the setbacks it has faced over the Middle East conflict.

The divisions between Israel and the Arab states give rise to some of the disappointment harboured by Arabs that the EU has failed to exercise adequate influence over the US and Israel in the search for peace. There are other areas where Arab and Muslim expectations have foundered: reaching out to Islamic communities, integration of Muslim populations within the EU, mixed signals regarded as religious intolerance and Islamophobia, encouragement of democracy and failure to accept its consequences, and the inadequate embrace of civil society, to name a few.

The articles which have been assembled in this supplement draw their own, frank conclusions. They highlight the challenges that Europe faces in building partnerships with governments, regimes, societies and the forces of political and economic liberalisation in the Middle East. The institutional and procedural reforms resulting from the Lisbon Treaty almost a year ago, and the establishment of the office of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (held by Baroness Catherine Ashton), have already added a new urgency and sharpness to EU foreign policy, and to the manner in which the 27 Member States rise collectively to the challenges laid before it in shaping itself as a regional power sensitive to the needs and expectations of its immediate partners. The High Representative chairs the EU's Foreign Affairs Council Ministerial, conducts the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and in her capacity as Vice-President of the European Commission, ensures the consistency and coordination of the European Union's external action. The European External Action Service is already taking shape as the instrument of the High Representative's new EU diplomatic service, of which the EU Delegation in Cairo forms a component, assuming responsibility as EU Local Presidency for coordinating contacts and consultations between Member States embassies in Egypt, and representing the European Union in its relations with government and civil society.

The following collection of articles represent an attempt to throw light on the different dimensions of the European Union's policies towards the Middle East, or in other words, the countries south and east of the Mediterranean. As such, they do not address relations between the two regions, nor do they focus on Arab or Middle Eastern attitudes or policies regarding Europe in general or the European Union in particular.

Moreover, the articles focus on the policies adopted by the European Union, what is meant to be a collective European stance towards the region, and do not address the positions or policies of individual European states, such as France or Germany, nor how they may differ from the former.

It may be argued that, by focusing on the collective European stances, we are standing on somewhat shaky ground. The European Union has been declaring its interest in the Middle East since the "shock" of 1973, which forced Europe to take a collective stance, and to try to play an active role in the region.

However, Europe's role in the region has remained, up to the present time, more of a theoretical conception than a substantive presence.

The articles examine the European Union's stances on a number of central issues including: political reform and the protection of human rights in the region, the peace process, relations between Islam and the West, the problems of immigration, regional cooperation, and their projected impact on the future of relations between Europe and the Middle East.

The articles present both European and Arab perspectives, presented by a group of distinguished academics and researchers from both

regions. In this respect, Al Siyassa Al Dawliya is indebted to the kind offices of Ambassador Mark Franco, Head of the EU Delegation in Cairo, and his distinguished staff, for facilitating the participation of the European scholars, as well as for funding the publication of this English supplement. Making these articles available in both English and Arabic will allow direct access to the perceptions and views of both sides regarding these issues. This provides a valuable basis for future discussions and debate.

Finally, it is no accident that both sides have chosen to put special emphasis on Turkey's regional role. As part of both Europe and the Middle East, it is a focal point at which both these cultures can meet and successfully find common ground.

*Ambiguities and Misconceptions:
European Policies towards Political Reform in the
Southern Mediterranean*

■ *By: Eberhard Kienle **

Contrary to the expectations held by at least some of its architects, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership has failed to contribute to the political liberalization, let alone democratization of Southern Mediterranean states. Ranging from political dialogue and dedicated democracy promotion programmes, to support for civil society and the private sector, the various avenues of change identified by the European Union (EU) have so far each ended in an impasse⁽¹⁾. Built on similar premises, the New European Neighbourhood Policy may improve governance within the limits posed by authoritarian rule, but it will hardly advance the cause of serious political reform.

In Egypt, for instance, the Barcelona Declaration failed to reverse the trend towards additional restrictions on political liberties that over the 1990s led to increasingly repressive amendments to the penal code, a rise in death sentences and executions, the increasing control of professional syndicates and heavily rigged elections. Some of these restrictions were eased at the end of the decade after the defeat of armed Islamist militants, but other, more discrete measures continue to guarantee the survival of authoritarian rule. Key among them are various forms of democratic window dressing such as the 2005 amendment of the constitution. About a year after the new association agreement between Egypt and the EU entered into force, the amendment

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1-'European Union' will be used as shorthand for all institutions through which the EU member states collectively formulate and implement policies towards external actors, in particular the Southern Mediterranean states; diverging positions among these institutions will be referred to if necessary.

allowed more than one candidate to stand in the 2005 presidential elections. However, oversight of the election was transferred from the courts to a new regime-appointed commission while the ‘security’ forces and other regime agencies continued to weigh heavily on the results. Predictably, President Mubarak with an overwhelming majority won a fifth term in office while Ayman Nur, with seven percent of the vote his most successful challenger, found himself in prison on fabricated charges of electoral fraud. Hardly any non regime candidate will be able to meet the yet more restrictive provisions that the revised article 76 applies to future presidential elections, including those to be held in 2011. In the legislative elections later in 2005, eighty-eight members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, standing as independents, managed to get elected and thus garnered 19 percent of the seats in parliament. Members of the regime’s National Democratic Party nonetheless won 68 percent of the seats which continued to assure them a two thirds majority. New constitutional amendments quickly set up another regime-appointed commission to oversee future parliamentary elections. Over the recent years public debate has become more open as sit-ins and demonstrations could be held in public spaces, albeit with heavy police presence. At the same time, however, restrictions on civil society were updated, independent judges disciplined and intimidated, and critical journalists persecuted.

Jordanians have fared no better since the Hashemite monarchy adhered to the Barcelona process. In 2001, four years after signing the Euro-Med association agreement, King Abdullah II dissolved parliament and relied on his residual legislative power to enact laws. Among the first pieces of legislation thus promulgated was a new electoral law that was again amended in 2003, when the King finally called for new elections. The law introduced a small quota for women and minorities, but its significance derives from the manner in which it favours rural over urban voters and constituencies; simultaneously the new mode of election favours tribal leaders over political parties and therefore strengthens the King. While a law passed in 2001 allowing the government to appoint municipal authorities was partially abrogated in 2007, new legislation almost simultaneously imposed additional constraints on political parties. Legislation pertaining to personal status issues is the only domain where women, at least, were granted some additional rights. This legislation however is less than consistently implemented.

In Morocco, the 1997 general elections changed the composition of

parliament a year after the country had signed its new association agreement with the EU. This brought to office a new coalition government, under the leadership of the Socialist party which had previously been in the opposition. However, the election results were as skilfully crafted and negotiated as ever, and key ministerial positions such as defence and the interior continued to be filled by King Hassan II without consulting the prime minister. Under Muhammad VI, who succeeded his father in 1999, no major reforms have been implemented apart from the more gender balanced personal status law enacted in 2004. In order to emphasise his own sovereign powers, the King after the 2002 ballot delayed the formation of the new government, thus illustrating the ultimate irrelevance of the elections. Simultaneously he reinforced top to bottom processes of decision making, for instance by reinforcing the powers of centrally appointed provincial governors. Critical journalists continue to be the victims of fabricated court cases and sentenced to bankrupting fines if not to prison terms. The anti-terrorism law of 2003 enabled the police to step up repression, in particular against the Islamist opposition. The 2007 elections merely served to repaint the democratic façade.

In Tunisia a brief period of political decompression in the late 1980s gave way to lasting and growing political de-liberalization in the 1990s and after; the process was unaffected by the Barcelona Declaration and the new association agreement with the EU signed in the same year (which incidentally was the first such agreement governed by the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership). The regime resumed its persecution of opposition groups, in particular Islamists; at the same time, it imposed new restrictions on politically relevant liberties more generally, culminating in the 2002 constitutional amendments which allowed President Bin Ali to stand again for election and to enjoy life time immunity from any form of prosecution. He was duly re-elected in 2004, a year after enacting an anti-terrorism bill which restricted liberties even more substantially. To this day, continuity prevails in terms of leadership and policies, and regime critics continue to be harassed, intimidated, attacked in public and imprisoned, without trial, or following unfair trials in courts subservient to the regime. Tunisia's use of eavesdropping, wiretapping, cyber-policing and censorship methods is among the most advanced in the Middle East and North Africa.

Political liberties in other countries that adhered to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership have not taken a more reassuring turn. Obviously in these

countries liberties continue to be redefined continuously, as happens elsewhere in the world, but no actual progress towards political liberalization, let alone democratization, has occurred in either Syria or Algeria. In Lebanon the departure of Syrian forces, entirely unrelated to EU policies, re-established the fragile equilibrium between the various political forces that historically characterized the country. Although the present system provides for a degree of pluralism, it has yet to produce a viable balance of cooperation and competition that could serve as basis for substantial political reform. The Palestinian territories naturally remain a case apart, since they are deprived of formal statehood, subject to numerous foreign imposed restrictions and occupied or controlled by Israeli troops.

A Neo- Conservative explanation of this sorry state of affairs would stress that, unlike the Bush administration in the US, the EU has never made any attempt to impose democracy by force. Europeans would happily concur, pointing to their allegedly superior wisdom which, however, may be no more than a rationalization for their lack of capacity. An explanation more mindful of available options would emphasize the failure of the EU to use the only legal instrument that the association agreements put at its disposal. The EU hardly ever invoked the democracy and human rights clauses of association agreements that could have allowed it to suspend cooperation with authoritarian regimes. When the European parliament “barked” at one country or another, executive authorities quickly moved to mend fences. A third and related explanation is that the EU never made up its mind about choosing between democracy and stability. As a matter of course, democratization may entail temporary instability, even if in the long term it produces democracies which are more stable than authoritarian regimes. Democratization may also help to power actors such as Islamists, whom Europeans regard with suspicion. Opting for short term stability leaves Europe with the devils it knows, as well as useful business and strategic partners. Clearly, security concerns euphemised as search for stability have become an even higher priority since the attacks against the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001.

There is no doubt that the renewed interest in stability shown by Europe and the US has contributed to the renewed and deepening erosion of liberties in the Southern Mediterranean. The United States and various European governments cooperate with the entirely unaccountable ‘security’ forces in Arab states to obtain what they consider crucial information to fight terrorism.

Government representatives in Europe and the US campaign for changes in legislation that would allow them to use information obtained under torture. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who during a speech in June 2005 at the American University in Cairo called on President Mubarak to embark on substantial political reform, on a subsequent visit to Egypt less than a year later, applauded Egypt's progress on that count and its contribution to stability in the Middle East. EU governments happily supported the Tunisian bid to host a UN information society conference even though they were well aware of widespread censorship and repression in that country.

The basic assumptions and misconceptions that shape the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the New Neighbourhood Policy at large are no less disastrous for the prospects of meaningful democratic reform. One of these misconceptions is that civil society, defined as non governmental organizations and voluntary associations can bring about democratic change. The fact is that, even in today's established democracies, civil society developed during the historical process that led up to democracy; civil society organizations never initiated this process. Even more problematic is the assumption that political liberalization is the corollary to economic liberalization. On the basis of this assumption, the EU has sponsored reforms to promote private sector growth and privatization, deregulation and market growth, expecting that economic liberalization would automatically translate into the retreat of the state and increased liberties for groups and individuals. Seen from that angle, democracy and human rights clauses act as simple reminders, sign posts on the inevitable road to democracy and human rights. Though entirely superficial, the assumption has some validity in so far as it defines economic liberalization in terms not only of privatization but also of a full fledged market economy. However, in the Southern Mediterranean countries, the – frequently limited - growth of private relative to public sector was never matched by the growth of markets and their emergence as the dominant mechanisms in the allocation of resources. Confusing private sector with market growth, external actors including the EU failed to push states to play the role of impartial market regulators or of transparent and accountable market builders. Anti-trust and regulating agencies are mostly regime controlled, if they exist at all. No doubt private sector growth was the easy part, as it allowed rulers to maintain control and choose those who would reap the benefits of privatization and the 'opening' of the private sector.

However, establishing free markets would deny these rulers the opportunity to favour their friends, family and other cronies, and would therefore weaken important pillars of their regimes. Put differently, markets endanger authoritarian rule as they imply the existence of multiple centres of power that are able to compete with one another and with the state. While derived from economic resources, the power of these companies, conglomerates or associations is political and therefore a challenge to authoritarian rulers. Historically, the existence of such mutually competing power centres in the private sector and among labour, have been a precondition for democratic change. In short, economic reform emphasizing private sector growth alone will not strengthen markets, nor will it favour or foster democracy.

The European Union and the Arab Israeli Conflict: In Search of a New Approach

■ *By: Mohammad El-Sayed Selim **

Europe has been an active player in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the establishment of Israel in 1948. It was the place where the Zionist movement gathered momentum in 1897, and twenty years later, Britain gave that movement a promise to establish a state for the Jews in Palestine, although Britain had no territorial jurisdiction in Palestine at that time. The Holocaust, which was a European phenomenon, was also instrumental in justifying the establishment of Israel. Europe's role has, however, changed significantly over time. The two main landmarks of this change have been the development of a "pan European" policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the shift towards full convergence with US policy in the Middle East. This latter shift has meant lending both covert and overt support to Israel's expansionist policies. It is our argument that unless Europe finds itself obliged to change its present course of action; its Arab-Israeli policy is likely to shift further in the direction of supporting the new racist call to recognize Israel as a Jewish state

This paper aims to review, assess, and explain Europe's stance towards the Arab- Israeli conflict, with a view to identifying its future trends. The emphasis will be on the collective policy pursued by the European Union (EU), rather than on policies of individual European states, although separation of the two is not always practical. We can identify three "waves" in the history of the EU's policies towards this conflict. The first took shape in the early 1970s, and by the end of that decade was a spent force. The second began in the 1990s and continued until the collapse of the Arab- Israeli peace process in 2001. Following the September 11, 2001 events, a third wave began in which the EU moved to endorse the new US strategy in the Middle East. The third wave has only served to delay the resolution of the conflict, giving Israel time to colonize the occupied territories and to exploit the conflict to serve Western interests against Iran. EU support to the Palestinian

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Authority (PA) was meant to achieve these goals as the PA has been instrumental in providing Israeli territorial expansion with some semblance of legitimacy.

In September 2010, a new round of negotiations began between Israelis and Palestinians without EU participation. It is widely acknowledged that these negotiations are not likely to bring about any significant changes, as the Israeli government is determined to dictate a settlement on its own terms. This is likely to lead to further tensions and instabilities in the region. Moreover, it is also widely acknowledged that a new war is likely to breakout in the region, with the aim of “finishing off” those who challenge Western hegemony in the region. Under these conditions, what are the prospects for a new European role that would represent a “Fourth Wave”, and could play a role in preventing such ominous developments? Is Europe likely to play a more active role to bring about a balanced settlement, or is it likely to continue in the same direction? And what conditions will determine its choice?

I -The First Wave

European powers began to develop a common policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict following the outbreak of the October 1973 War, and the imposition of an oil embargo on some European states. Since Europe at that time imported 80% of its oil from Arab countries and Iran, its urgent need to change the paradigm of its Arab-Israeli policy was understandable.

. The then nine members of the European Community (EC) issued the Brussels Statement in November 1973, which called for a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on Security Council resolution 242. The statement furthermore stressed the “need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation which it had maintained since the 1967 conflict”, and recognised that “the legitimate rights of the Palestinians must be taken into account in the establishment of a just and lasting peace”. This resulted in a decision by the Arab oil exporting countries to exempt all of Europe, except the Netherlands, from the planned December 1973 production cutbacks. In December 1973, the Arab countries announced that the flow of oil to Europe would be increased by 10% in January.

These developments marked the beginning of what was subsequently called the “Euro-Arab Dialogue” between the EC and the Arab world, although the two sides had different views on its content and structure.

Whereas Europe insisted on restricting the dialogue to economic issues, and barring the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from taking part in it, the Arabs, represented by the League of Arab States, contended that the dialogue should cover all issues which concern the parties, and that Europe should have no veto over the participation of the PLO. The disagreement was resolved by forming two regional negotiating teams, one Arab and one European with the Arabs appointing the PLO representative, Ahmad Sidki Al-Dajani, as chairman of the Arab group. But the EC continued to maintain to the Dialogue should be restricted to economic issues. The Dialogue helped to impress on the EC the need to consider the centrality of the conflict for Arabs and to persuade the EC to develop a common policy towards it. This policy was subsequently articulated in a number of declarations: on 29 June 1977, 19 September 1978, and 18 June 1979, as well as in the speech delivered by the Irish Foreign Minister of behalf on the EC at the thirty-fourth United Nations General Assembly. However, the Dialogue achieved little as the EC insisted on articulating its Arab-Israeli policy outside the structure of the Dialogue, and refused consistently to play an active role in the resolution of the conflict which led to the suspension of the dialogue in 1980.

In response to the suspension of the Euro-Arab Dialogue, the EC issued the Venice Declaration on 13 June 1980 on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Venice Declaration represented a turning point in European policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. It introduced the principles of the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people including the right to self-determination, the inclusion of the PLO in the Arab-Israeli negotiations, the rejection of the EC of any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem, the need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation which it had maintained since the conflict of 1967, that the Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, and the readiness of the nine member states to participate in a system of binding international guarantees. The Venice Statement received mixed reactions in the Middle East. Whereas Israel categorically rejected the Statement as amounting to “another Munich”, the PLO accepted the Statement with some reservations, as it did not recognize the Organization as the representative of the Palestinian people. However, most Arab countries considered the Venice Statement a step in the right direction.

The Venice Declaration was significant in that it adopted a substantially different approach than that endorsed by the US in the Camp David peace process. The

Declaration was more assertive in its reference to Palestinian self-determination and the status of Jerusalem. Understandably, the US adopted a lukewarm approach towards the Declaration, and launched a successful campaign to shelve it.

European powers subsequently adopted a bilateral, rather than collective approach to the issue. This was not only a response to US opposition to the Venice Declaration, but also to the state of disarray in the Arab regional system following Camp David, the Lebanese civil war, and the Iraq-Iran war. Europe was also able to reduce its reliance on Arab oil, as world oil supply increased in the early 1980s, and prices dramatically declined; Political declarations appeared no longer necessary. Moreover, the nine member states of the EC were embarrassed by Israel's vehement rejection of the Venice Declaration, and this helped persuade them to give up that exercise.

II- The Second Wave

The Middle East and the Arabian Gulf region were engulfed by crisis as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The convening of the Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid in October 1991 and the ensuing collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 changed the strategic environment in the Middle East. This encouraged the revival of a collective European approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. European forces played a major role in the international coalition formed to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The issue of Israeli occupation of Arab territories once more moved center-stage when Saddam Hussein linked his withdrawal from Kuwait to Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territories. It became apparent to the world that western powers were willing to take decisive and military action to end the occupation of Kuwait, while they were reluctant to play an active role when it came to Israeli occupation of Arab land. To address this issue, the Madrid Arab-Israeli peace conference was held in October 1991 under the auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union.

The EC was only invited to the Madrid conference as an observer. Moreover, when bilateral Arab-Israeli political negotiations began, the EC, which had now become the European Union (EU) after the signing of the Maastricht treaties, was excluded. The EU participated only in the multi-lateral talks within the framework of the five working groups, while the US monopolized the bilateral talks which addressed political issues. In 1994, the US and Israel called for the convening of the Middle East and

North Africa (MENA) conference in Morocco to discuss Middle Eastern economic cooperation, and again, the EU was only invited as an observer.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union had actually changed the strategic environment in the Middle East, so that it had now become possible for Europe to pursue a collective and independent policy without being overly sensitive to considerations of Euro-Atlantic solidarity. The EU also began to perceive that the Mediterranean area and the Middle East were becoming a source of new threats to its security. These included illegal immigration from southern Mediterranean countries, the rise of political and religious extremism along with socio-economic deterioration, all which had negative implications for stability in the region.

It took the EU almost three years to process the implications of these transformations in terms of European policies regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. This delay was mainly related to two factors: disagreement within the EU, and US objections to European political involvement in the region. As to the first factor, a major debate was taking place between the Germans and the French over the EU's future directions. The Germans advocated their traditional approach of focusing EU efforts on securing and integrating Eastern European states, to ensure this region would not become a threat to Western Europe in the future. This policy also implied a preference for a bilateral approach that would give each European country a free hand in determining its policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. The French, on their part, contended that the EU should pursue an active policy on the southern flanks of the Union, reviving its common approach to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The end result was a compromise; the EU would adopt a common policy toward the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it would have a primarily economic focus, complementing the political role of the US.

This "Second Wave" of European activity was directed at the Mediterranean area at large, in which the Arab-Israeli conflict was included. Some labeled it as "a New Orientalism"(1), or in other words, a revival of the traditional Euro-orientalist approaches to the region. It was mainly embodied in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) project proposed by the EU in October 1994. The European draft of the Charter for Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean, and the Common European Strategy toward the Mediterranean issued by the EU summit held in Portugal in June 2000,

set forth the EU's role with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was mainly restricted to the prevention of future conflicts rather than resolving the present one(2). It was also maintained that if the EU were ever to play a role in the area of conflict resolution, this would be restricted to the introduction of confidence building measures. The EU became and continues to be, the largest donor of economic aid to the PA, established after the Oslo Accords of 1993. It provides 50% of the external aid the Authority receives.

Overall the EU's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict has been widely considered as limited, especially when compared with its role in other conflicts. Moreover, the EU approach is limited in effect, since the continuation of conflict is likely to negatively influence the possibilities of establishing a future-oriented cooperative model. But perhaps the main criticism is related to the EU's over-emphasis on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) as the main approach to the resolution of the Middle Eastern conflicts. CBMs are a status-quo oriented concept. Europe used this approach in the 1970s within the context of the Helsinki process to reinforce and stabilize East-West political understanding. This understanding evolved around two major notions: the stabilization of the territorial status quo in Europe, and East-West strategic equilibrium which was, in turn, reinforced through numerous arms control agreements. Such a political understanding is lacking in the Middle East. In this region there are major territorial disputes and no arms control agreements have been reached. Consequently, the EU's over-emphasis on CBMs translates in reality to a perpetuation of the status quo, of Israeli occupation of Arab territories. The introduction of CBMs should go hand in hand with the establishment of arms control regimes and the resolution of territorial disputes in the Middle East (3). The surge of hostilities between the Israelis and the Palestinians since 2001 has been a testimony to the limitations of the European conflict prevention and CBMs approach.

III -The Role of the EU in the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Post 11 September Era: The Third Wave

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, EU policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict made a major shift in the direction of full convergence and division of labor with the US. Although this was not altogether a new orientation, it was openly formalized within the framework of the Quartet, a structure invented in 2002 to monitor Arab-Israeli negotiations and introduce

new terms for peace which bypass UN resolutions. Although the Quartet also included the UN and Russia, their role was marginal, the emphasis being on the “Euro-American” role in the Arab-Israeli conflict (4). The September 11 attacks were the main catalyst for this shift, as they revived a sense of Euro-American solidarity within NATO. The EU joined the US in the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, as well as its “War on Terror” all over the Muslim world. Israel took full advantage of this new situation, and succeeded in categorizing Palestinian resistance movements as terrorist organisations which should be destroyed.

We can describe Europe’s role in the Arab-Israeli conflict during this period as performing three functions within the context of US strategy: facilitator, shock absorber, and supporter at critical thresholds. A brief review of these roles may be in order. The EU continues to restrict its role to that of conflict prevention, leaving conflict resolution to the US, even as a member of the Quartet. This was clearly illustrated during the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations initiated in September 2010. As shock absorber, the EU makes an effort to deflect Arab indignation over full US backing of Israel, mostly through verbal statements which have no practical implications. For example, when George Bush announced in 2004 the new US position on the Israeli withdrawals and the return of the Palestinian refugees, the Irish Presidency of the EU declared that the EU would not recognize any changes to the 1967 borders unless they were mutually agreed upon by the concerned parties. Moreover, it declared that “the future settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians must include a just and realistic solution to the issue of the refugees.” The statement did not refer to Bush’s announcement, or to what the EU would do to implement its stance. The reference to a “realistic” solution to the refugee problem, in western diplomatic jargon, translates into re-settlement. In the same vein, the EU Council issued a statement on December 8 2009, which called for East Jerusalem to be the capital of the future Palestinian state “as a part of a negotiated peace”. It once again reiterated the EU would not recognize any changes to the 1967 borders unless “mutually-agreed upon” by the parties. At face value this appears a strong policy statement, but in fact, as Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu remarked, it added nothing new. All measures, according to this statement had to have Israel’s approval, but it did not specify what the EU would do if Israel did not accept it, no time frame was mentioned.

Further, at critical thresholds, the EU and some of its member states act to legitimize US and/or Israeli policies.(5) This occurred in October 2003, when

the EU placed some Palestinian resistance organizations on its list of terrorist organizations, even as Israel was moving vigorously to annihilate Palestinian resistance. The EU has supported US and Israeli strategies in the Middle East, actively participating in the boycott the democratically-elected Hamas government, and imposing a blockade on Gaza after 2007. Most EU member states supported Israel during its military attack on Gaza in December 2009, even encouraging it to finish the job. They also objected to any international investigation into Israeli practices during this aggression. The EU has stood by as Israeli attacks have destroyed the Palestinian infra structure built with its support, merely protesting it may demand compensation in the future.

While the EU is the PA's largest donor, its arms sales to Israel are second only to those of the US. France tops the European list of arms sales to Israel, followed by Germany and Britain. EU arms sales to Israel amounted to US\$11 billion in 2006. Germany has sold Israel submarines capable of deploying nuclear warheads while conducting an active campaign against Iran's nuclear program. In fact, Israel is most likely to use these submarines if it decides to attack Iran. EU arms sales to Israel also include internationally prohibited weapons, but despite agreeing on "the Code of Conduct on Arms Exports" in 2008, the Code was never applied to Israel and the EU never objected to their use against the Palestinians. The EU's strategic relations with Israel have turned that country into a de facto member of the EU. Javier Solana, former head of EU foreign policy, actually said in 2009 "Israel, allow me to say, is a member of the European Union without being a member of the institution" (6)

IV- Factors Shaping the EU's Role in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

It can be argued that EU policy toward the Arab- Israeli conflict is unbalanced and heavily tilted towards Israel. EU policy statements attempt to pacify the Arabs while providing Israel with time to finalize its plans for the occupied territories. EU economic support to the PA serves the same objective, and the PA has become an umbrella for Israeli designs. This stance is linked to Europe's sensitivities to its historical record with the Jews, the impact of Zionist pressure groups on the continent, disagreements within the EU over the main thrust of its Arab-Israeli policy, the reluctance of Israel and the United States to engage the EU in Middle East peace process, and the lack of a linkage between European interests in the Arab world and the EU policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. A brief review of these factors may be in order.

Europe's Historical Legacies and Zionist Pressures:

European policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict is over-burdened with the historical legacies of the atrocities committed against the Jews and the quest to make up for that by compensating Israel. This is quite clear in the case of Germany, which has become a major supplier of arms to Israel. Zionist lobbies in Europe are also quite instrumental in influencing policy decisions at both the national and European levels. In the case of Britain, it has been argued that “Great Britain has never been under the influence of a foreign government lobby group as it currently is. These groups have formed strong relationships with policy makers while simultaneously attempting to stifle criticism of Israel in the press and media regardless of whether or not such criticism is based on our national interests as a sovereign nation” (7).

(ii) Israeli-American Objection to a European Role:

Israel and the USA have denied Europe access to the Middle East peace process. Israel prefers to solve the conflict through bilateral negotiations with the Arabs without outside intervention. If such intervention became necessary, the US is the only it would accept. In April 2001 Shimon Peres, the Israeli Foreign Minister publicly rejected an offer from the EU to mediate in the Arab-Israeli conflict arguing that Washington is the preferred peace ally for Israel. This was confirmed by Prodi the EU Commissioner, who asserted in February 2001, “The EU has not played a role in the Middle East up until now because the Israelis never recognized that role”.

(iii) Contending Views within the EU on the Arab-Israeli Conflict:

One of the main factors, which limit the ability of the EU to play a crucial role in the Middle East peace process, is that its member states pursue different and sometimes contradictory policies as far the process is concerned. Whereas Germany and the Netherlands tilt heavily towards Israel, Spain and Greece advocate a more balanced approach. Sir Cyril Townsend has suggested that because Germany is the “weakest link towards Israel” within the EU, and at the same “the largest player within the EU”, it has consistently pressured the EU not to adopt an anti-Israeli stance, and has been largely successful. (8).

This explains the self-contradictory language, which characterizes some EU declarations on the Middle East. For example, whereas the Berlin Declaration

refers to negotiations as the strategy of establishing a Palestinian state, the same Declaration argued that the right to build that state should not be subject to a veto by any power. Similar disagreements and cross pressures exist among members of the European Parliament. Whereas right wing coalitions support Israel, the left is more inclined to advocate an Arab-Israeli peace dialogue, and can go so far as to impose sanction on Israel. The Statement issued by the EU Council in December 2009 was initially drafted in a strong language, but the French Foreign Minister Kouchner, played a significant role in rendering it toothless.

(iv)The Arabs do not Link Euro-Arab Relations to the EU's Arab-Israeli Policy: Arab countries share part of the responsibility for the EU's stance in this respect. They have not actively insisted on linking economic cooperation to the political resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The fact that they joined the "Union for the Mediterranean" - a wholly economic institution which aims to establish Arab-Israeli economic cooperation without a political resolution of the conflict- is sufficient testimony the Arabs do not take the question of linkage seriously. No Arab country has insisted that the Union should deal with political issues.

Conclusion:

Is a Fourth Wave in the European policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict likely to emerge in the foreseeable future? There have been new variables which could persuade the EU to play a more active and balanced role in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. These include:

(i) The increasingly hawkish tendencies in Israeli politics since the election of the right wing government of Netanyahu. This government has indicated beyond doubt that it is only interested in dictating a settlement on its own terms, and in turning the Palestinian territories into apartheid Bantustans. This gives European governments moral grounds to disengage from their traditional support to Israel.

Closely related to that factor is the change in European public opinion against Israel. In a public opinion poll conducted by the BBC in 2007, it was found that Israel was viewed quite negatively in the world, including in Germany (77%), Greece (68%) and France (66%) (9). In October 2008, a German Foreign Ministry official voiced concern over the growing anti-Israel mood in Germany, adding that though German Chancellor Angela Merkel is

considered one of the most pro-Israel leaders in the European Union and in the world, public opinion appears to take a completely different view (10). These changes in public opinion are likely to influence European policy makers to re-consider present policies.

The failure of the Union of the Mediterranean to develop significant patterns of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation under conditions of political turmoil on the Arab-Israeli front. It seems that European policy makers have concluded that the future of the Union and that a change in the Mediterranean strategic environment is needed in order to revive it, (iv) Turkey's new Arab-Israeli policy. Under the Justice and Development Party, Turkey has changed its Arab-Israeli policy in the direction of searching for credible solutions and objecting to Israel's expansionist and militaristic policies. Although this may be a liability against Turkey, it has in fact alerted Europe to the importance of pursuing a more active and balanced policy. For the first time, many European countries have condemned Israel's killing of Turkish citizens on the Free Gaza Turkish Flotilla; and (v) Iran's emerging influence in the Middle East is also a potential input in the European policy making process in the Middle East, especially if Western powers were not able to force Iran to freeze uranium enrichment with Iran potentially developing a nuclear bomb. In fact, if Iran developed that bomb, it could have far reaching repercussions in the direction of creating a new balance of power which is bound to persuade Western powers to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict in a more serious way. History tells us that durable peaceful settlements occur under conditions of strategic balance.

However, it seems that the crucial factor necessary to persuade the EU to create a "Fourth Wave" of engagement with the peace process has not yet materialized. As long as the Arabs do not insist on a European role and link that role to their strategic relationship with Europe, a significant change in the EU's policy is not likely to develop.

Endnotes:

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Problems in Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue: A European Perspective

■ *By: Alexandra Senfft **

“Sensible people easily find a compromise when they are aware of the most important needs of the other side”, said Palestinian philosopher Sari Nusseibeh. If this is true, we are left with the conclusion that politicians in the Middle East might be far from being sensible. Worse perhaps, the majorities who voted these politicians into power apparently lack a sense of reality and seem to have no visions for their future.

Rarely have prospects for peace between Palestinians and Israelis seemed as dim as they do today. Concerns that no Palestinian state will materialize appear totally justified, as do expectations for another outbreak of violence with a yet unknown force and devastating effects, possibly also for the rest of the world. And there are strong reasons to fear that Israelis are gradually destroying their own state by allowing and supporting right-wingers and religiously motivated fanatics to decide their fate. On 22 June 2010, Boaz Okon, legal affairs editor of *Yediot Achronot* – an Israeli newspaper not usually known to be left-wing in its orientation – tried to alert his readers by listing a number of undemocratic events occurring in Israel: “Just like in a children’s connect-the-dots colouring book, where connecting random dots creates a picture, so in Israel, if you connect a number of horrifying, multiplying incidents, you begin to see a monster. These dots are growing evidence of the lack of the spirit of freedom and the emergence of apartheid and fascism.”

Instead of looking for compromises in order to ensure a common future in peace and security, most Palestinians and Israelis are blinded by deep mistrust for each other. Their opinions and deeds are ridden by fear, prejudices and

* German author specializing in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. She has Lately published “*Fremder Feind, so nah*” (Strange enemy, so close. Encounters with Palestinians and Israelis) a book, portraying Palestinians and Israelis in dialogue.

images of the enemy. Jerusalem Post author Larry Derfner wrote on January 13th 2010 : “Being Israeli today is about being against. Against Palestinians. Against people who criticize the way we treat Palestinians. Against Muslims in general. That’s it. That’s what it means to be Israeli, ever since the Intifada started a decade ago and we concluded that no Arab could be trusted. Except for its hi-tech image, this is all Israel stands for anymore – being against this one, against that one and against anyone who isn’t against them, too. To be Israeli today is to organize your thinking around the enemy.”

On the Palestinian side, the majority nowadays views contacts with Israelis as a “normalisation” of the occupation, and those Palestinians who continue to cooperate with Israelis in seeking peace are often exposed to immense pressures from their environment. The negative perception of the “other” is so deeply ingrained in the two societies that this “culture of conflict” (Daniel Bar-Tal) by now dominates every sphere of public life. It is common knowledge that conflict is ongoing between Palestinians and Israelis over land and resources, over personal security and self-determination. It is, however, less known that contradicting perceptions and narratives are among the main obstacles to making peace in the Middle East.

Intractable conflicts are characterized by the opponents’ inability to open up to the perspective and the narrative of the other group. A fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of dialogue is that it ought to gradually, incrementally convince the other side of the truth of one’s own perspective which, once it is accepted, will then dictate the practical outcome. Seriously, attentively listening to the other side is generally associated with forfeiting one’s identity and with it one’s moral claim to being in the right. An Israeli for example might feel that truly listening to the personal story of a Palestinian might force her or him to admit that the Jews of the pre-state Yishuv committed an injustice in 1948 in driving the Palestinians out of their homes and off of their land which could, in turn, raise questions as to Israel’s right to exist. Palestinians listening to the fate of the Jews during the Second World War often feel insecure about how “good” their own story of suffering is in face of such a catastrophe – and about whether, if found “not good enough”, it may abolish their right to self-determination? In many failed dialogues, Palestinians have felt silenced and powerless when hearing about the annihilation of the Jews, to which some reacted defensively, accusing Israelis of behaving like Nazis. This in turn has hurt the Israelis, who felt that their narrative and their feelings

were being ignored. This dynamic usually ends in a predictable, abrupt break-off of the meeting.

Senior Researcher Aziz Abu Sarah explains: “I must admit that growing up I did not know much about the Holocaust. As Palestinians, we simply did not learn about it. There was a stigma attached to it, an understanding that Israel would use the Holocaust to lobby for sympathy, then turn and use the sympathy as a terrible weapon against the Palestinian people. So when I was asked about the Holocaust, I always felt that defensive urge to say “It was not my fault! I suffered for it too.” Deep down, I think I felt that by acknowledging their pain, I would betray or marginalize my own suffering. Also, some part of me feared that if I sympathized with “the enemy,” my right to struggle for justice might be taken away. Now I know this is nonsense: you are stronger when you let humanity overcome enmity.” Abu Sarah understood that he had to learn about the tragedy of the Holocaust in order to successfully communicate with his Jewish friends. One would expect his friends, by the same token, to acknowledge the Palestinian fate in order to empathize with him and enter a true dialogue.

Dialoguing with the enemy does not mean relinquishing one’s positions: “Acknowledgement is not the same as legitimization”, says Palestinian professor Sami Adwan. Since any rapprochement is generally perceived as a threat to one’s own story and identity, it feels easier to deny the other, rather than engage in dialogue, to neglect his interests, de-legitimize his positions and fight him to the brink of war. “The vivid, fearful image of a threatening Arab ‘other’ served, and still serves, in Israel as the antithesis against which identity is defined, creating an illusion of cohesive ethnicity, of coherent nationality and statehood, while suppressing the reality of multiple, fragmented, competing cultures within still non-existent territorial borders. No less than defending - or emanating from - a pre-existing ethnicity or even a given nationality, then, ongoing conflict steadily delineates, feeds and informs both”, says Israeli peace activist Reli Mazali.

A dialogue could be considered already successful when both sides acknowledge that there isn’t one single shared narrative but two differing ones, both with a right to exist. After the Second Intifada, Sami Adwan and the late psychologist Dan Bar-On, together with a group of Palestinian and Israeli teachers and two historians, developed a new school textbook. This

presents both narratives side by side. “We think that true peace means that you recognize how the other is different from you, not how the other is the same as you are”, said Bar-On. “To create a bridging narrative means to create a same-ness. We don’t want to create an illusion of same-ness; we don’t think that will happen, not in the near future, at least. So first of all you have to recognize that the other thinks differently from yourself.”

Middle East analyst Tony Klug from London reported on an extraordinary meeting between Palestinians and Israelis in Berlin during the month of May, 2010. Among the Israelis were representatives of the right-wing parties Likud, Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beitanu party and the right-centrist Kadima. As Klug had anticipated, the atmosphere of the meeting deteriorated by the day. But “on the fourth day, there was a sudden dramatic change. The Israelis had been pressing for the full plenary session to divide into smaller clusters, while the Palestinians – fearing a trap – preferred to stick with one large group. Two of the Israelis, separately, drew me aside and asked if I would explain to the Palestinians that for the first time in their lives they felt the pain of the Palestinians, realized it was not a tactic but genuine and wanted to find a way to say sorry and explore how Palestinian human and national rights could be realized without jeopardizing Israel’s own national existence. On the final day, two of the most outspoken participants, one from each side, jointly presented to the plenary session an outline peace treaty, with some novel arrangements, which they each were prepared, with some trepidation, to commit to. However unlikely the terms, it was a remarkable conclusion to a rollercoaster event, which ended with hugs all around.” Although Klug qualifies his statements by adding, that “it’s possible the impact did not even survive the voyages back home”, he also feels that such an encounter could be replicated in some way in the future.

This experience is comparable to what Dan Bar-On concluded about his work on the two historical narratives with Palestinian and Israeli teachers: “The success was that they could listen to each other and not de-legitimize either their own or the other point of view. It’s very difficult to contain in yourself both stories. You can’t expect that to all happen in one meeting.”

Many dialogues fail because of the huge asymmetry between the two parties, which is exacerbated during the encounter and leaves the participants with even more consolidated stereotypes of the other. The right timing, the

right place to meet and the language chosen for communication are of major importance in order to create a favourable atmosphere for a dialogue that builds on equality from the outset while retaining a clear view of a common goal of ending the occupation and making peace. As participants become willing, over time, to listen to each others' stories rather than preach, trust can begin to develop, thereby preparing the ground for an eventual compromise.

Awareness of different uses of terminology is also of vital importance since it may help to avoid inadvertent insults that may end in a collapse of the meeting. While Israelis for example speak of the "war of independence" in 1948, the very same event for the Palestinians is the "Nakba", the catastrophe of their dispossession and dispersal as a people, making them refugees. For the Palestinians, those who resist the occupation are regarded as freedom fighters; for most Israelis they are terrorists. Palestinians speak of Palestine while many Israelis, particularly those with right-wing views, speak of Eretz Israel when talking about the same land.

Gross generalizations, devaluations and a dehumanizing language are part of the conflict. Unlike Germans and Jews who have, over time, developed a common narrative about the past, clearly defining the perpetrator and the victim, Israelis and Palestinians continue to wage a battle over who suffers more and who is the victim. As if it were a forgone conclusion that the victim is always right, each side claims that the other was the perpetrator. The majority of Israelis tend to see themselves as victims of Palestinian terror and feel that their right to exist is permanently in jeopardy. By clinging to this image of themselves, they deny their role as oppressors and occupiers and evade responsibility for their actions. Palestinians are occupied and humiliated on a daily basis; but this does not grant them the eternal status of victims; they too can be or become victimizers – of Jewish Israelis or at times of their own people. The fact is that there are victims and victimizers on both sides.

In order to understand the deeper layers of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is indeed necessary to look beyond history and politics into the field of psychology – only then is it possible to begin grasping its complexity. French-Lebanese scholar Gilbert Achcar subtitled his lately published book "The Arabs and the Holocaust" with "The Arab-Israeli war of narratives", referring to "the two defining traumas of the conflict: the Holocaust and the Nakba". As philosopher Brian Klug mentioned in his address at the book launch on July

1st 2010, in London: “It is hard to imagine anything more macabre than this desperate, relentless contest of catastrophes.” And yet this is the reality on the ground, traumas passed down through the generations, creating a subtle atmosphere of horror and fear – and at the same time a unifying identity even for those who experienced neither the Shoah nor the Nakba.

In reference to the villages from which Palestinians were evicted or fled in 1948, which were taken over by Jewish families, Bar-On stressed how important it is, “to recognize that such a location has a past and a present, that such a process is inter-generational and that you can’t live in the present without knowing what happened there in the past ... and you can’t live only in the past, you also have to recognize what happened in such a place since then.”

The psychologist who did pioneering work in building bridges between the children of Nazi perpetrators and the children of Nazi victims, advised not to compete over who suffered more – because there is no objective way of measuring suffering. Instead, he proposed that each party try and understand the enduring, present impact of unresolved experiences of the past. Former PLO diplomat Afif Safieh put it into this perspective: “If I were a Jew or a Gypsy, the Holocaust would be the most horrible event in history. If I were a Black African it would be Slavery and Apartheid. If I were a Native American, it would be the discovery of the new world by European explorers and settlers that resulted in near total extermination. If I were an Armenian it would be the Ottoman-Turkish massacres. And if I happen to be a Palestinian, it would be the Nakba – Catastrophe. No one people have a monopoly on human suffering. It is not advisable to try to establish a hierarchy of suffering. Humanity should consider all the above as morally repugnant and politically unacceptable.”

Unfortunately, it is not only those directly involved in the conflict that cannot find a common ground and be sensible in finding solutions. The same is true for ordinary observers and active participants outside the conflict, in the international community. When it comes to Palestine and Israel, the majority prefer to be either for the Palestinians, or for the Israelis, rarely for both. This introduces other perspectives and narratives to the conflict that add fuel to the fire and indirectly also become factors in the dynamics of hostility. “We all have our prejudices. Our individual prejudices are just a tiny part of the burden of understanding. But unless we are aware of them, we are more

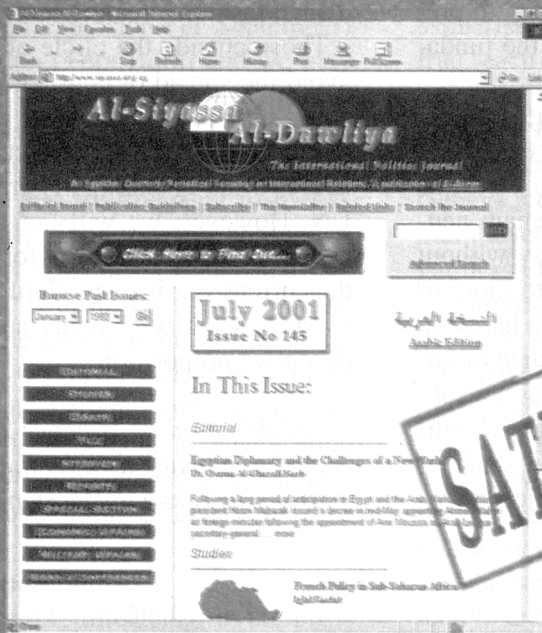
likely to be part of the problem than of the solution”, is one of Palestinian lecturer Saida Nusseibeh’s conclusions regarding conflict resolution.

For Germans, the power of the past is still prevalent and often not worked through on an individual level. Thus unexamined emotions tend to influence attitudes towards Palestinians and Israelis and towards Jews in particular. A given individual’s feelings of guilt about the crimes of his or her ancestors can, in many cases, lead to a need to deny ambivalence and support just one of the opponents in the (futile) hope of finding a relief from the past. Avoiding the complexity and difficulty of containing several narratives simultaneously can also shape views of Islam or of Judaism, which tend to become distorted and full of clichés. Such outlooks in fact constitute emotional reactions grounded in past experiences which are only loosely related to any knowledge, experience or analysis of reality. They accordingly do injustice to those afflicted by the conflict on the ground.

Not knowing the other leads to all kinds of prejudices and racist views, to anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic sentiments. What happens in the Middle East is therefore mirrored abroad. Opposing the occupation of Palestine is not synonymous with being against Israelis or Israel. The solution is to fight for the right to self-determination of the Palestinians and at the same time for the right of Israelis to live in peace and security. It therefore seems mandatory to support both peoples and to aim at promoting those who have incessantly sought for peace. There are countless veterans and young people in the Palestinian and Israeli peace movement who need the attention and active political support of the international community. Politicians could learn a great deal from the dialogue approaches of activists on the grassroots-level. This way they could truly serve their people rather than playing dangerous and destructive power games. It is only when the politicians in government begin cooperating with the grassroots-level, creating a coordinated approach, that a lasting solution can be implemented in the Middle East.

To conclude, people and politicians should critically analyze their personal perspectives before discussing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and before taking political action. Bar-On used to stress that a monologue - an awareness of our own narrative and identity - is a prerequisite to a dialogue. It is, also, important to acknowledge each one of the different narratives. Palestinian writer Samir el-Youssef says that those who support only one of the conflicting parties are in fact opting for war. Therefore, serious dialogue is not only paramount and necessary between Palestinians and Israelis; It should also happen within the European Union and among its political partners abroad, as well as within ourselves.

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The West and Islam: Transcending the Present Crisis

■ *By: Dr. Ahmad Kamal Aboul Magd **

Any attempt to analyze the relationship between “Islam” and the “West” immediately raises several methodological issues. How do we define Islam? Do we mean Islam as a faith, a body of jurisprudence, a value system which underpins Islamic Culture? Or do we mean “Muslims”: individuals, communities and nations, who adhere to the Islamic faith, and adopt a particular understanding of that faith which differs from place to place, and from time to time?

The same methodological problem applies to defining the “West”. The term is usually used in reference to Europe and the US, and sometimes includes Latin America as well. Since Christianity is the dominant religion in these areas, the discussion often becomes centered on the comparison between Islam, with its various components, and Christianity.

Defining the relationship between the two “worlds” is also problematic. This is a relationship that has extended over 14 centuries, taking various twists and turns as its historical context has also changed. The increasingly rapid cultural, political and economic changes we are experiencing in today’s world, the major revolutions in technology and communications, have also had their impact on the relationship between Islam and the West. On the one hand, direct encounters between different and distant cultures are now possible, with no intermediaries involved. On the other hand, international competitions over hegemony and control have intensified, and this has had adverse consequences for weaker parties, who may appear to threaten, the interests of these competing powers.

One of the most outstanding studies of the relationship between the West and Islam was presented by Professor John Esposito, of Georgetown University in his book “The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?” The book

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traces the encounter between Islam and the West to its earliest roots, when the successful political, cultural, as well as religious expansion of Islam, posed a challenge to Christianity, which also perceived itself as having a global mission. Confrontation was therefore bound to dominate this relationship instead of cooperation, despite the common roots and shared values between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. All sense of this shared heritage was completely obliterated by both historical competitions and modern conflicts. The distorted image of Islam, the stereotypes and misconceptions which historically prevailed in the West, eventually evolved into the interpretation which today equates Islam with terrorism and fanaticism.

The recent uproar caused by the plans of an American pastor in Florida to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the US by burning copies of the Koran (plans which were eventually abandoned) is symbolic of the unprecedented depth to which the relationship between the “World of Islam” and the “World of the West” has sunk. This deterioration goes beyond all reason, is expressed in aggressive behavior alien to the very essence of Western civilization, and is based on a complete misunderstanding of the true nature of Islam. Reasonable people every where are called upon to make a concerted effort to overcome this situation, and reassert the principles of cooperation and mutual understanding, based on points of common agreement among all religious faith and humanitarian philosophies. All must stand fast before the growing tendency to exclude the “other” and vilify him, which if unchecked, will have serious consequences for the world as a whole.

There have in fact been various attempts to reach this common understanding. I have myself been party to several endeavors during the last decade, including for example, the activities of the Council on Interaction. The Council gathered representatives of all faiths: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, in Doha, Qatar, to discuss the implication of the rising tide of religious favor, and its impact on international relations and human rights. A further meeting was later held in Germany, in which participants presented the product of their research. It was encouraging to perceive that all the papers were characterised by their objective approach, and their emphasis on the points of agreement common to all the religions and philosophical creeds under discussion. They also reflected an understanding of common dangers faced by all. The papers were later collected and published in a volume titled “Crossing the Divide”.

Historical events are by nature complex, multifaceted and must be understood in reference to the historical context in which they took place. Understanding is often made more difficult by deliberate attempts to obscure and misconstrue certain events. Attempts to take more “objective” stances while studying the relationship between Islam and the west have no doubt been undermined by the recent images of clashes between Muslims of various intellectual persuasions and backgrounds on one hand, and those perceived to belong to “Western civilization”, on the other.

It may be useful here to compare how two different events in the history of Islamic-Western relations have been approached. The first, and older, example is that of the Crusades, the advent of Christian European armies to Muslim lands under the pretext of defending and spreading the Christian faith. If a large number of Christian historians had not later stepped up to explain the colonial nature of these campaigns, that they were not a genuine crusade to spread Christian faith, this false interpretation might have been accepted to this day.

The second, and more recent, example is how quickly a political and popular consensus was reached, following the attacks of September 11 on the United States, that a certain group was responsible, and that furthermore, this terrorist act reflected the true nature of all Muslim movements, organizations and nations. Although ambiguity still surrounds various aspects of these events, the panic inspired by that fateful day has had seriously negative consequences and continue to plague Islamic-Western relations to this day. In the absence of any attempt at objectivity, many in the West perceive each and every Muslim as a dangerous terrorist, who must be hunted down, excluded and held at bay. This is the most severe crisis in the history of relations between Western countries and Muslim nations and states – both on the level of official and popular public relations.

Looking Towards the Future

While there is, in fact, no single political or cultural Islamic model, Tunisia and Morocco are quite different to Afghanistan and Pakistan; nor are US and EU positions identical, nevertheless, it is still possible to identify a number of factors that will have an important impact on Islamic-Western relations as a whole. Some of these factors are related to trends in the international system, while others relate to developments within Arab and Muslim societies.

Some international trends are encouraging. There is growing emphasis in the West on safeguarding freedom of expression, human rights and the right to national self-determination. There has also been growing awareness in Arab and Islamic societies of the importance of defending human rights and realizing political and social reform. These trends provide a foundation on which better mutual understanding and cooperation can be built.

Unfortunately, there are also impediments to reaching this better understanding, and Western stances towards the Arab-Israeli conflict play a major role in this respect; as does the strong influence of the Zionist lobby on the policies of the US and the UE, who are the leading powers shaping the international management of this conflict.

The clear backtracking by President Obama from the policies he outlined in his famous Cairo speech is a case in point. The policies he has adopted in practice display complete tolerance towards arrogant Israeli positions that deny Palestinians their right to return to their own land, and insist on continuing to build settlements on occupied territories. They also reveal the complete absence of political will to establish a just and peaceful settlement. Those who seek to understand Arab rage and determination to support Palestinian, Arab and Islamic resistance movements, must comprehend how Israeli extremism plays a sabotaging role, and how injustice and oppression breed a spirit of animosity. The West in general and the US in particular, have endorsed Israeli repression by turning a blind eye, and claiming to maintain an “even handed” approach to both oppressor and oppressed.

As long as US military and economic might dominate the international system, the prospects for a just and peaceful settlement will diminish year after year. Only if a multi-polar international system emerges in which competing powers balance and limit one another, can we hope for a more equitable outcome for this conflict. In the absence of these conditions, it would be the height of self-delusion to place any trust in Israeli “good intentions”, especially in view of all the support its very effective lobby can mobilize. In the present international situation, no justice or peace can be achieved. Moreover, those who choose to overlook Israeli aggression and to abandon their legal, political and moral obligations – by virtue of their position of strength within the international system – must bear the burden of guilt for the conflicts and clashes that will ensue.

What Arabs and Muslims Must Do

Domestic political conditions in Arab countries will also influence the future of West-Muslim relations. Many Arab states have become subject to external pressures that practically dictate their policies. This external influence steers Arab policies towards alliances and policy positions that are difficult to defend before their domestic constituencies, and threaten, sooner or later, to cause domestic upheaval. Arab public opinion has been unable to comprehend or to accept, why many Arab states have ceased to stand up to blatant Israeli aggression, and how these states have come to ignore that it is the militarized Israeli state which is their true enemy in the Middle East. Instead, they witness Arab regimes declaring their open hostility to other regional players, such as Iran, Hizbullah and Hamas, with which they have no bone of contention. While there may be areas of competition with these players, this competition can be exploited to further the real interests of all Arab and Islamic states. We cannot but be aware that the active stances of Turkey and Iran, both non-Muslim Arab states, and of Hamas, a resistance movement, detract from Egypt's position and role as the political and military leader in the region. But these remain secondary contradictions, while the Arab's true and central contradiction, on all political, economic, cultural and military levels, remains with Israel. Arab public opinion has received no explanation as to why this fundamental stance has been abandoned. Their confusion leaves them unable to understand, or take a stand on, crucial issues that will influence the future of an entire generation.

Furthermore, intellectuals and leaders of all Islamic movements and currents, have a duty to end their state of isolation from the external world with all its political and intellectual currents. They must actively seek to explain to the world the true nature of their political culture, and the principles on which they build their understanding of their own religion. They must work hard to correct the false perception that they pose a threat to peace and freedom, the ideals so cherished in western culture.

In particular I would like to point out to leaders of the Islamic movements that their efficiency in mobilizing and organising supporters has not been accompanied by a similar effort to widen their cultural and intellectual horizons. The discourse of these movements still consists of mainly general statements, drawn from limited intellectual and scholarly sources. They have

therefore abandoned their duty to innovate, and have neglected to keep abreast of major developments in the realm of international relations, and changes in life style that have resulted from the revolutions in science and technology.

I say to these leaders: all these changes necessitate the modification of both your political and cultural discourse. You must radically change how you operate in this new environment, and revise many of the basic concepts that guide your understanding of Islam.

Islamic organisations in Arab and Islamic countries, as well as Muslim Communities in Western countries must end their isolation from all other social and political currents and movements around them. They must maintain constant interaction in order to establish avenues of effective cooperation that serve the interests of communities as a whole. Within Arab societies, Islamic movements have ceased to be involved in the larger social movement for reform, and continue to pay a price for this isolation. Muslim communities in the west, by isolating themselves from the societies in which they reside, have diminished their social and political influence. None of this bodes well for future relations between Western states and Muslim peoples.

Islamic movements must also abandon their harsh and demanding rhetoric, and remember that all religions at their core carry the message of mercy to all people, and aim to liberate all men from domination by others. It is not Islam's role to make life more difficult, or add new burdens to the ones Muslims already bear. These organisations must also, irrevocably and in all good conscience, renounce the use of any means, overt or covert, to forcibly bring about social or political change. While most movements have in fact done so, their recent history still raises justifiable fears in others. It will require time and diligence to bring these fears to an end.

There is also a need to develop clear positions within Islamic discourse on several issues: the role of women in society, the position of non-Muslim minorities and the nature of the "state" in Islamic society. Many Muslims still adhere to the erroneous misinterpretation that women have no role outside the home, that they are inferior in both intellect and religion. The rights of non-Muslim minorities in predominantly Muslim communities must be clearly spelled out. Finally, a clear and decisive definition of the nature of the State in Muslim countries must be put forth. Will it be a "religious" state administered by clergy? Or a civic state whose leaders come to power on the basis of merit and popular choice?

Governments in Arab and Islamic countries must also do their part by discontinuing the use of force in their interactions with these organizations and movements, and understand that religious extremism is a complex phenomenon, with social, economic, cultural as well as religious dimensions. The historical record clearly shows that violence only begets violence, that breaching the boundaries of the law while trying to fight any ideology or belief system, no matter how erroneous, only makes its adherents more determined and spreads their ideas even further. The rule of law remains the only guarantor of security for both ruler and ruled.

Conclusion

We must all, those who fear Islam and those who fear for Islam, step back from this environment of fear. There is still time to disengage and reevaluate our misconceptions of both friend and foe. While Muslim leaders and intellectuals must address the task of re-examining their discourse and reengaging with the world as a whole, there are challenges that must be faced in the West as well. The West has gone a long way towards establishing freedom of belief, faith and expression, as well as the rule of law. Western societies face the challenge of reviving the value of justice, and abandoning all forms of arrogance towards “the other”, thereby dealing with all on the basis of human equality.

Both Western and Islamic civilizations respect individual sanctity, responsibility and accountability. All must strive for better understanding and conduct in order to avoid further strife.

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The Return to “Realism” in European Union Policies in the Middle East

■ *By: Kristina Kausch **

Recent years have seen a relative European pull-back from active support for democracy and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This is not to suggest that budgets have been cut or projects massively shut down. EU total allocations under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) have increased in recent years, although the MENA region has typically been underrepresented.⁽¹⁾ Member states’ bilateral programmes remain limited in volume and ambition. By and large, financial and programming commitments for European support of political reform in the region remained stable.

Funding levels alone, however, say little about the changing nature of current EU policies towards the MENA. The withering European commitment to political reform is due to the diminished political backup; on the ground, conflicts of interests between different EU foreign policy strands are leading to a de facto erosion of European democracy and human rights support. This lack of policy coherence and factual commitment stands in stark contradiction to a plethora of the EU’s declared foreign policy goals. Disappointment accumulates accordingly amongst pro-reform local stakeholders in the region. What has produced this apparent return to more ‘realist’ patterns of external action? What does this development tell us about the dynamics that currently condition European foreign policy? Is the Lisbon Treaty likely to substantially alter the EU’s political practice in this regard?

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1- The EIDHR, a global instrument and the only under which the EU is able to transfer funds to civil society organisations without prior host government clearance, increased its total funding levels from EUR130m in 2007 to EUR145m in 2010. As the number of eligible countries has increased from 29 to 68 between 2002 and 2006, however, amounts available per country and region have decreased. Of the total EIDHR annual budget, the amount allocated to projects in the MENA was approximately EUR9m in 2009.

The European pull-back from support for democracy and human rights has been strongly conditioned by the changed international environment over the past decade. The economic crisis has reinforced inward-looking policy-making, strengthened protectionism, and de-coupled trade deals from any conditionality rationale. The forceful emergence of new regional leaders and other non-democratic international actors, who constitute attractive alternative partners to authoritarian MENA governments to advance their economic interests, decrease the EU's weight and leverage in the region. The ever more numerous imminent collective security challenges in the MENA, including nuclear proliferation and other regional and sub-regional security crises, alter European attention and priority-setting. At the same time, the EU's capacity to face these enhanced challenges to foreign policy making is – at least temporarily – weakened by the ongoing EU internal governance transition that the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty implies. In other words, in a more complex and unsafe world, EU power, capacity and unity have been weakened.

Against this setting, EU policies in the MENA in recent years have been characterised by a number of trends. EU foreign policy in the region has become markedly 'securitised'. From counter-terrorism to migration, energy to trade, the various strands of EU external action are now seen through an increasingly narrow security lense. By the same token, an exclusionary, defensive bent prevails across all policy strands.⁽²⁾

Moreover, EU leverage and incentive power in the MENA region is decreasing, with the respective negative implications for the attractiveness and viability of conditionality-based policies such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Attempts to revive European incentive power by seeking new formulas to make the EU's trademark 'political reform and modernisation by integration' more attractive for its neighbouring partners through a series of 'upgrades' (advanced status, privileged partnership) have not yet yielded any meaningful results in terms of advancing human rights and political reform. By a similar token, tame EU efforts to de-politicise and revive the multilateral track in the Mediterranean via a revamp of the Barcelona framework into a new 'Union for the Mediterranean' seem to have been built on sand.

2- See also Richard Youngs and Kristina Kausch: *The End of the Euro-Mediterranean Vision*, *International Affairs*, Vol 85 n° 5 (2009), pp. 963-975.

These increased challenges have led to a stronger focus on the bilateral track, both in community and member states' policies. This development undermines a larger multilateral vision for the Mediterranean, and favours bilateral deal-making, often in contradiction to community policies.

Finally, as a result of all the above, EU external action in most of the region is increasingly void of the normative goals proclaimed in EU foreign policy documents and statements. The overall value of development assistance programmes aimed at supporting human rights, democratic governance and political reform in the region is being jeopardised by the lack of systematic political back-up from European capitals. Human rights activists from Morocco to Syria complain over the janus-headed nature of EU policy-making.

Academic debates over recent years have suggested that, alongside its military and civilian power, the EU's identity as an international actor was characterised by its post-modern 'normative power', projecting its norms abroad and shaping its external action according to these principles⁽³⁾ Liberal values of democracy, human rights and pluralism are among the EU's founding principles and its very *raison d'être*. Consequentially, they have – at least nominally – been at the heart of all EU major foreign policy frameworks towards its neighbourhood. Promoting peace, democracy and prosperity in the European East and South have been the guiding ideas of the Barcelona Process, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and (although far more marginally) the Union for the Mediterranean. Often proclaimed a distinctive trademark of EU identity, the EU has been defending its profile of 'normative power' in the international affairs arena.

Current trends in EU external action in the MENA, however, seem to suggest that the idea of normative power as a main driver of EU foreign policy was but a chimera. The EU's return to stability-oriented alliance-building with authoritarian governments suggests that the Union's holistic vision for the Mediterranean that was underlying the Barcelona process was but a temporary outburst of idealistic enthusiasm of the post-Cold War years, which now moves 'back to normal'. 19th century British prime minister and foreign secretary Lord Palmerston (1784-1865) famously said that 'nations

3- Ian Manners: Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?, *JCMS* 2002, Vol 40 n°2, pp. 23558-.

have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests'. In order for the EU to fill the notion of 'normative power' with life, a basic consensus among member states to defend fundamental liberal principles such as democracy and human rights in the MENA, even at the expense of important strategic economic and security interests, would be required. Evidence strongly suggests that such a basic consensus is currently lacking.

Expectations have been huge that the Lisbon Treaty will resolve the entirety of pending EU governance and identity issues. The changes in the EU's foreign policy structures following the implementation of the EU's new rulework certainly offer fresh opportunities to enhance the efficiency and coherence of EU policy-making as a whole, including in the area of supporting political reform abroad. The Treaty's mention of democracy as a core value provides a valuable reference point for future policies of support to democracy and human rights. But there are also some risks. The way in which debates have progressed over the detailed implementation of Lisbon structures does not, at the moment, augur well for at least some aspects of democracy support.

The upgrade of EU Delegations under the Lisbon Treaty will potentially contribute to improving policy coherence, efficiency and response to local realities. Likewise, the strengthening of the European Parliament (EP) – by far the most outspoken and normative EU institution when it comes to denouncing human rights violations in the EU's neighbourhood – is good news for the pro-democracy agenda. The EP's enhanced competencies include veto power over the budget of the new European External Action Service (EEAS) as well as key personnel appointments. In addition, some mechanism of oversight – or at least engagement – of the EP's democracy caucus over the EEAS would be useful.

During debates over the EEAS, the idea of a powerful horizontal unit on democracy and human rights has not been prominent. Baroness Ashton has suggested this was not necessary as human rights were a 'silver thread' that should run through all external policies. This posture stands against the notion of a more holistic approach that would put support to human rights and democratic governance in a wider context of institutional reform and economic development, and ensure coherence among the various policy strands. Ashton's first draft of a blueprint for EEAS did not mention human rights at all. Upon pressure of the EP, however, this area was strengthened in

the final EEAS proposal. A ‘focal point’ for human rights will be established in each EU delegation. Moreover, the EEAS central global affairs department will explicitly cover human rights and the promotion of democracy. A useful exercise would be if this unit could be charged with a rigorous monitoring of the Agenda for Action attached to the ‘Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU’s External Relations’⁽⁴⁾ (the current formal consensus among EU member states in this field) at regular intervals, to be opened to wider debate.

The Lisbon Treaty and the new provisions regarding the EAAS provide numerous valuable opportunities for enhancing the efficiency of EU policy-making on a technical level, including in the area of supporting human rights and democratic governance. However, they are very unlikely to tackle the pile of open larger strategic and normative questions in which the EU’s return to more ‘realist’ policies in the MENA are rooted. In foreign policy, the Lisbon Treaty did not change fundamental decision making of the European Union, as it did in other policy areas. The overall direction of EU foreign policy in the post-Lisbon era will still be decided upon by member states by unanimity, and foreign policy will remain an intergovernmental affair, thus favouring member states’ narrower national interests. The lack of policy coherence in EU external action is not a problem specific to the MENA region, but lies at the heart of current debates over the EU’s overall role and profile as a global foreign policy actor. The changed international environment over the last decade requires a fundamental rethink of the relationship between strategic self-interest and support to domestic political change in the EU’s external action.

This is an aspiration which the current revamp of internal governance arrangements will hardly be able to satisfy.

4- Council of the European Union: Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU’s External Relations, 2974th External Relations Council meeting, Brussels, 17 November 2009.

The EU's Normative Basis

■ IAN MANNERS *

The broad normative basis of the European Union has been developed over the past 50 years through a series of declarations, treaties, policies, criteria and conditions. It is possible to identify five 'core' norms within this vast body of Union laws and policies which comprise the *acquis communautaire* and *acquis politique*. The first of these is the centrality of peace, found in key symbolic declarations such as that by Robert Schuman in 1950, as well as the preambles to the European Coal and Steel Treaty in 1951 and the TEC of 1957. The second is the idea of liberty found in the preambles of the TEC and the TEU of 1991, and in art. 6 of the TEU which sets out four foundational principles of the Union. The third, fourth and fifth norms are democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, all of which are expressed in the preamble and founding principles of the TEU, the development co-operation policy of the Community (TEC art. 177), the common foreign and security provisions of the Union (TEC art. 11), and the membership criteria adopted at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993.

In addition to these core norms, it is also possible to suggest four 'minor' norms within the constitution and practices of the EU, although these are far more contested. The first minor norm is the notion of social solidarity found throughout the *acquis communautaire et politique* of the EU, but in particular the preambles of the TEC and TEU, the objectives of art. 2 (TEU) and art. 2 (TEC), and the central focus of both the EC's social policy and the Economic and Social Committee. The second minor norm is anti-discrimination found in art. 13 and Title XI of the TEC, as well as the protection of minorities found in the Copenhagen criteria. The third minor norm is that of sustainable development enshrined in art. 2 (TEU), art. 2 (TEC) and the all-encompassing art. 6 (TEC). The fourth minor norm is the most recent and has yet to find any formal expression in treaty form, but is implicit in the Copenhagen criteria. This norm is the principle of good governance as found in Romano Prodi's inaugural speech to the European Parliament (Prodi, 2000), as well as Commission papers on 'EU election assistance and observation' (COM(2000) 191 final) and the 'White Paper on European governance' (COM(2001) 428 final).

* IAN MANNERS, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS* 2002, vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 235-258.

Europe and Turkey's Middle Eastern Policy

■ *Dr. Mustafa Al-Labbad **

Turkey has reestablished its presence as a key player in the political mechanisms of the Middle East after a long absence, through an emerging and balanced regional policy that cemented its position as a regional reference point. The road to reestablishing such regional eminence was fraught with barriers, a combination of internal barriers and international obligations, but the regional policy promoted by Foreign Minister Ahmed Dawud Ughlu overcame all political barriers and historical sensitivities to return Turkey to its civilizational and geographical neighborhood after decades of absence.

Turkey's new regional policy eliminated long-existing dualistic beliefs which maintained that a choice must be made between East and West, that a focus on Europe and the West required a negligence of connections with the East. Its foreign policy overcame the dualisms rationally and systematically, drawing upon an exceptional political imagination and unbounded ambition, yet based upon a realistic foundation reflecting a deep awareness of regional compositions and structures, allowing Turkey the greatest leverage possible in light of the international and regional balance of power. And though it may appear that there is a conflict between Turkey's simultaneously reaching out to both the Middle East and the European Union, such a conclusion is in fact untrue. Significantly, Turkey's Mid-Eastern popularity largely stems from its offering of a prototype of openness towards the West added to peaceful transference of power between its political parties and a growing economy ranked at 17th in the world, all assets that Turkey would never have attained without a deep connection to the West. Additionally, Turkey's growing role in the Middle East guarantees the European Union influence in the raging Mid Eastern conflicts, preserving European interests in the region and acting as a "buffer state" insulating the heart of Europe from the ramifications of said conflicts. There is a double role that Turkey plays in the Middle East from the EU's perspective, but to limit its foreign policy to a choice between an

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‘Eastern policy’ or a ‘Western policy’ takes the level of political analysis back to bygone eras, causing it to lose the necessary complexity and sobriety.

Turkey between East and West

To limit available options to a choice between East and West is to base one’s thinking on the dualism of the ancient East: a choice between Good and Evil, or Light and Darkness, with both sides locked in an eternal conflict that can only end with the destruction of the vanquished by the victor. Such simplistic notions belie the sweeping global changes that have occurred since the late twentieth century and their major influence on Turkey’s foreign policy: the collapse of the Soviet Union, the escalation of ethnic conflicts in nearby Europe in the Balkans and Eurasia, and the prominence of Islamic Fundamentalism both regionally and internationally, all of which were factors driving Turkey towards a resurgent geo-political regional role. The events of 9/11 brought about new polarizing factors such as anti-Western terrorism and the US occupation of Iraq, creating new challenges for a Turkey institutionally and structurally linked to the West, but with a Muslim majority population, and with enough ambition to seek a better regional and international position.

In the context of this turbulent regional and international environment, the Turks sought to reform their foreign policy to encompass both maintenance of the primary focus on the West, with the addition of an openness towards its Middle Eastern neighbors. And though this policy had attained much success on the Eastern front, in Europe it has been met with much suspicion of Turkey’s newfound independence in administering its foreign policy. Western mistrust of Turkish intentions grows with the increasing effectiveness of said policy in the Middle East, whether with regards to Turkey’s relations with Iran and Syria, or the repeated criticism of the Israeli occupation of Gaza which reached its peak after the Freedom Flotilla incident. It can be noted that Western suspicions can often take a somewhat superficial form in direct contrast to European rationalism, as doubters harbor a worldview dividing humanity into religious blocs with Turkey placed in an Eastern Islamic bloc, hostile to the West and the United States and Israel, thus granting further justification to their preconceived opposition to Turkish EU membership. Such religiously oriented European voices classify Turkey under the Justice and Development Party as an Eastern authoritarian state, a classification in opposition to logic and reason as it constitutes a strategic error detrimental to

European interests, at a time in history of great need for a stabilizing Turkish presence in the Middle East.

It is difficult for many analysts to comprehend, at a time when Turkish negotiations for EU membership are utterly prioritized, that Turkey's newfound relations with Middle Eastern countries do not entail severance of Euro-Turkish relations, but rather are reshaping Turkey's foreign policy in a manner expanding its influence regionally and internationally. Doubting the intentions of the Justice and Development Party as it drives this openness to the Middle East obscures a fundamental truth: that Turkey's attempts to extend the horizons of its foreign policy extend as far back as the 1980s in the era of Turgot Ozal and the Motherland Party, the ruling faction at the time.

Aware of the sensitivity involved, Turkish Premiere Ragab Tayyyib Erdogan addressed the issue of a supposed Turkish alienation from the West at the opening address of the Istanbul Conference of 2009. He rejected the possibility of a core transformation occurring in Turkish foreign policy, stating that "the issue of a deviation in the course of Turkish foreign policy is not feasible. We are on the same course that we were on during our first term since coming to power, and will continue to follow due course." He also emphasized that the escalation of Turkish influence in the nearby South and East was aimed at lightening the burdens of the European Union.

Erdogan additionally responded to the opponents of Turkish EU membership on the grounds that it would render the EU a neighbor of the world's most unstable region, stating that there is a sense of a lack of European presence in the region despite this being a historical era where protection of Western interests is vital. He also highlighted the importance of Turkey to the EU, it being a regional power overlooking the Middle East in a manner beneficial to the EU. Turkey's regional role is based on objective factors of self interest, and not on creedal connections, and it is understood that Turkey would play a major regional role to strengthen its national interests, and to preserve European interests in the region.

Driving Factors behind Turkey's Regional Role in the Middle East

The driving forces behind Turkey's regional emergence can be divided into objective factors and dictates of self-interest. There are six of the former, at the forefront of them the existence of a huge regional void left by the collapse

of what was known as the Arab regional order, especially after the occupation of Iraq in 2003. The second objective factor is that Turkey shapes its regional policy under the support of the United States, it being a counterforce in the face of Iran's regional influence to which the United States is visibly hostile, this despite Turkey's insistence that it is not confronting Iran at all. Thirdly, Turkey's expansion of its regional influence has far less political costs than benefits given that the strategic purposes of such expansion are completely fulfilled in the case of the Middle East. As evidence, it is worth noting Iran's regional role which Iran has invested in both financially and ideologically to build a network of alliances with states and movements and political parties for thirty years.

Fourthly, the Middle East is the only neighboring geographical area in which Turkey can play a major role without collision with a global power, in contrast to the Caucasus under Russian influence or Albania and Bosnia under Central European influence. Fifth is the positive image of Turkey in the eyes of vast segments of the Arab population and the unprecedented welcoming by broad Arab sectors of a Turkish regional resurgence for the first time since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, a support that reached the extent of talk of the 'Turkish Model' and the necessity of benefiting from its positive aspects such as the peaceful transfer of power, the immersion of the Islamic movements into the political process, the separation of the state and the parties, and the expansion of room for political maneuvering in light of an alliance with the single global hegemon. The sixth factor is the shared Arab-Turkish history and the existence of a cultural, civilizational and creedal similarity between the two ethnic groups, making Turkey a more 'native' regional player and somewhat simplifying its tasks.

The dictates of self interest can be far more easily summarized. First and foremost, Arab states are an excellent market for Turkish products, which attain a regional competitive advantage absent in Europe. The Arab region with its energy reserves is highly attractive in light of growing Turkish demands for oil and gas, demands fueled by a growing economy and Turkey's ambitions of becoming a gateway for energy supplies to Europe, thus strengthening its strategic position. Furthermore, Turkish security is on the line, since playing a major regional role means participation in setting the regional agenda and extending Turkish defense lines to the farthest degree possible on Turkish lands as Turkey has historically been victim to

terrorist attacks, whether political as in the case of the Kurdish and Armenian conflicts, or ideological such as attacks by religious zealots active in nearby territories. Finally, Turkey's regional prominence would improve its image among Europeans, scoring points as it were with a continent hesitant to accept it due to cultural and religious factors, on the grounds of Turkey functioning as a security barrier separating the EU from the Middle East.

Turkey and the Middle Eastern Balance of Power

Turkey's regional function constitutes an excellent chance for Europe to attain certain goals in pertaining to the balance of power in a manner that could provide stability to a turbulent area, including limiting the growing influence of Iran, a country which has exploited the American failures from Afghanistan to Iraq in order to solidify and spread its regional dominance. Yet a Turkish resurgence does not mean a direct clash with Iran or a continuation of the established pattern of Turkish-Israeli relations, which necessitates for Turkey to position itself differently in a manner that allows it to perform its new functions as dictated both by international demand and local desire.

Here, it must be noted that Turkey will not support a military strike on Iran as a solution to its nuclear issue as the backlash would damage Turkish interests in the region. Yet Turkey simultaneously opposes a nuclear Iran as that would tip the historical duel between the two countries over dominance of the Middle East in favor of the Persians. For this reason, Turkey plays a moderating role in negotiations as the primary regional reference point, a course of action occasionally misunderstood in European circles. A resurgent Turkish influence in Iran and Syria would also necessitate a reduction of Iranian influence, yet this is being carried out in a soft and gradual manner, not in a direct and confrontational one. Relative Turkish alienation from Israel does not equal an established enmity between the two countries or a boycott of the West, but rather is a course of action dictated by Turkish national interest.

Turkey was in fact the first Muslim country to recognize Israel in the Middle East, and their relationship reached a peak in the 1990s, and were usually described as an alliance. Yet this close relationship existed due to the circumstances encapsulating both, and thus it is impossible for the status quo to remain should Turkey emerge as a regional power. After all, the limits of Israeli military power were made clear in its engagement in Lebanon against the Hezbollah in 2006, and were made clear again in the assault on Gaza at

the end of 2008. As a consequence, Israel was relegated to the position of a regional player, and more was to come with the attack on the Freedom Flotilla near the Gaza coast on the 31st of May 2010, when Israeli forces killed nine Turkish civilians in international waters aboard a civilian Turkish ship headed to Gaza Strip to lift the siege upon it, all of which brought relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv to an unprecedented low.

Turkish-Israeli relations since 1949 were hardly constant and static, but rather embodied a regional-international alignment in the face of a grander international alignment. Turkey was the first Islamic country to recognize Israel as this was necessitated by the Turkish-America alliance, an alliance forged in the face of the threat of the former Soviet Union, which has geographically constituted a historical threat to Anatolia in bygone eras. With Tel Aviv also included in the list of US Cold War allies, Turkish-Israeli relations were strengthened in the face of an opposing international alliance. But with the fall of the Soviet Union the dynamics tying Turkey to Israel changed, with both countries now becoming Middle Eastern powers sharing two common factors: membership of the same international alliance, being neighbors to the same hostile Arab states Syria and Iraq. Thus relations have continued smoothly, but not in the context of both states being team players in an alliance opposing an equally substantial alliance. And with the shifts in power in the Middle East and the rise of Iranian influence in 2003, and Syria's more amiable approach to Turkey, the Turks were no longer surrounded by hostile states as before, and thus a pivotal cog in the alliance with Israel became non-existent. For all intents and purposes, Turkey's alienation from Israel is motivated by vital Turkish interests and not by the convictions of the Justice and Development Party, as some Israeli circles have claimed.

The Turkish Model of Opposing Fundamentalist Islam

The potential Turkish contribution to the European Union is not limited to the direct benefits and significance of its reshaping of the regional balance of power, but extends farther to better horizons. Such horizons are embodied by the rise of the Justice and Development Party, a party with an Islamic ideological background yet in total adherence to Turkey's secular constitution and the principles of the civic state and the peaceful transfer of authority. This provides a civic democratic alternative to the region's masses. It is well known that the violent combat the Middle East is witnessing is spawned primarily

by the struggle between totalitarian systems suffering from widespread corruption on the one hand, and fundamentalist movements monopolizing the opposition on the other. Relevant to Turkey's regional success is for the Justice and Development Party to offer a model for a democratic civic party with an Islamic background that reconciles with modernity and upholds the civic state, which helps isolate radicalism and fundamentalism in the region and deactivates a potential time bomb right on Europe's doorstep, all of which is purely in Europe's interest.

Because of this, the spread of Turkish influence is opposed by fundamentalist and extremist groups, the nature of the opposition being both short-term and long-term, even if Islamist movements in the region temporarily or occasionally use the Justice and Development model to score points in debates with other political movements. The capital funding invested in the Justice and Development Party has accumulated its surplus through traditional productive operations in the agricultural and industrial sectors, rendering the party a thoroughly Turkish party with powerful ties to the overarching political-economic networks and their national specifics. In contrast, the Middle Eastern Islamist movements have grown in conjunction with the rise of oil and gas prices in the mid-seventies and the resulting financial growth of the oil states. Such financial clout was, and continues to be, circulated in the region in favor of Islamists to confront opposing intellectual and political movements and trends, and thus an intimate and seemingly unbreakable bond was formed between Islamist parties and the finances of the oil states. Therein lies the vital difference that distinguishes the Justice and Development Party from its Middle Eastern counterparts: the former is thoroughly Turkish, whereas the latter are purely a product of economic oil-spurred growth and is governed by what may be labeled 'growth values'. The latter Islamists are also centered upon the inheritance of clan and tribal regional peculiarities, and are connected to the global economy in a parasitic manner based on the policies of the international pricing of energy resources, and not based on any local production. Conflicting interests and inclinations render differing ties to political, national and regional agendas inevitable, due to the differing political and cultural values between the two models.

The existential origins of Anatolian Islamic movements differ markedly from their Arab counterparts. This is manifest in the Sufi roots of the Turkish movements, which emphasize the importance of purpose-oriented

jurisprudence over other more conflict-driven interpretations, to reach a harmonizing between the purposes of Shari'ah (Islamic Law) and the complexities of the Turkish reality and the national peculiarities thereof. On the Arab side, the proclamations of political Islam are founded on the legacy of Abu al-Aala al-Mawdoodi, which solidify views on the nature of religion and its purposes, in the contexts of the continuation of tribal-international alliances to control the resources of the growing gulf economies.

The Turkish agenda in the era of the Justice and Development Party has remained strictly Turkish, guided by its requirements and setting policies based on the interests of the politically ascendant social strata within Turkey, and the Party has not allowed itself to be led by sister parties in other countries. It is not a trans-national party in any way. Ragab Tayyib Erdogan heads a purely Turkish party adopting Turkish national interest as its starting point and reference point, whereas Islamist movements in the region usually prioritize trans-national bonds over uniquely national issues, and integrates regional and international agendas into its political activities and propagation. Additionally, membership in the Justice and Development Party is open to all Turkish nationals of any faith or creed, in contrast to the Islamist movements. Based on all this, the rise of the Justice and Development Party in conjunction with the rise of Turkish regional influence constitutes a major opportunity for the European Union to rectify values and ideas held by many Islamist movements opposed to the West and openness to the world. It also offers a model for an advanced political system able to manage the political process in adherence to the rules of democracy without any authoritarian monopoly of power, a characteristic shared by the majority of ruling regimes in the Middle East.

The suspicions of those skeptical about Turkey's Middle Eastern trajectory may seem justified as a mere first impression, but a deeper look into the effects that Turkey has on the structure of the Middle East and the balance of power within it, as well as the vital change that the Turkey's experience is creating within well-established ideas and concepts, both popular and elitist, on a governmental level and among the opposition, all prove that Turkish policies offer an invaluable service to the European Union, both now and in the long run.

Turkey's Middle Eastern Promise

■ *By: Nathalie Tocci*

In the European Union, the Middle East and the United States, Turkish foreign policy has attracted much attention as of late. Indeed, Turkish foreign policy has been undergoing a profound transformation, which has impinged on both the “quantity” and the “quality” of Turkey’s involvement in the Middle East.

In terms of quantity, Turkey has “re-discovered” the Middle East. Turkey’s “Westernized” secular establishment had shunned the Middle East for decades, selectively engaging with the region often in the context of American foreign policies during and after the end of the Cold war. Today, Turkey’s artificial detachment from the Middle East is slowly being reversed. Qualitatively, Turkey’s growing involvement in the Middle East since the 1990s has recently changed in nature. During the 1990s, Turkey’s military ties with Israel, its coercive pressure on Syria and its participation in Western sanctions against Iraq were largely framed within a “realist” understanding of the Middle Eastern balance of power. Today, Turkey attempts to develop relations with all actors in order to promote peace and regional integration. In line with this goal, Ankara has mediated between Israel and Syria, Israel and Hamas, within Lebanon and Iraq, as well as between the US and Iran. The 2009 High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Agreements between Turkey and Syria, and Turkey and Iraq are unprecedented developments, as is the June 2010 agreement between Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to establish a trade and visa free zone. The only outlier in this new Turkish policy approach is Israel. Particularly since Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, Turkish-Israeli relations have been hampered by Turkish condemnations of Israel’s conduct in the Israeli-Arab conflict, and Israeli rhetorical retaliation. The crisis was further aggravated in June 2010, when Israeli Defence Forces killed nine Turkish citizens on board a Turkish vessel, part of an international flotilla,

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carrying humanitarian goods to Gaza in defiance of the Israeli blockade. With the magic of the Oslo years over and Turkey's relationship with Syria no longer marked by the tensions of the past, the Turkish-Israeli relationship, far from being the strategic military alliance of the 1990s, is increasingly linked to developments related to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The transformation of Turkey's Middle Eastern policies is often attributed to the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Indeed the rise of the AKP and the foreign policy orientation of current Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu have played an important role. Davutoğlu's notions of "strategic depth" and "zero problems" with neighbours have provided a powerful ideological umbrella to Turkey's Middle Eastern policies. But the domestic factors underpinning Turkey's Middle Eastern policies are far broader. The transformation of Turkish foreign policy is inextricably tied to the country's economic growth, and the rise of a business sector with an active interest in foreign policy-making and a thirst for Middle Eastern markets. It is also linked to the growing diversity and strength of civil society in Turkey, and the increasing importance of public opinion. Whereas in the past foreign policy making had been the exclusive realm of the government, the military and the foreign ministry, it is today subject to influences of a complex mosaic of actors in the country.

Regional and international dynamics have also played an important role in opening space for Turkish involvement in the region. The 1990-91 Gulf war, which put renewed emphasis on Turkish-US strategic cooperation, also opened the way for increased Turkish assertiveness in the Middle East. The 2003 war in Iraq, however, unleashed a different set of dynamics between Turkey and its southern neighbors. Cooperation between Turkey, Syria and Iran was born in the specific context of the run-up to the 2003 war in Iraq. The three states, which all border Iraq, had mutual concerns over Kurdish separatism, and therefore initially tried to avert the war. Failing in this objective, they subsequently worked together to prevent the dangerous spill-over from the unstable situation in Iraq. Today, as US troops withdraw from Iraq, the need for cooperation has only been reinforced. The integrity of the Iraqi state can only be guaranteed through the close cooperation of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

In terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Turkey has stepped into a glaring

vacuum. Since the Oslo process collapsed, the US has been unable to re-launch a peace process worthy of the name. The nominal expansion of the mediation framework through the formation of the Quartet has not altered this fundamental reality. The EU, for its part, has failed to develop a credible strategy towards the conflict. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (now Union for the Mediterranean) has foundered on the ruins of the peace process. As for the EU's direct engagement with the conflict, in those areas where the EU has not played second fiddle to the United States – bilateral relations with Israel and aid to the occupied territories – the Union has risked playing into rather than reversing the dynamics fuelling the conflict. Moreover, both the US and the EU have handicapped themselves through their boycott of Hamas. Sanctioning the movement or simply wishing it away has failed to serve Arab-Israeli peace. As for regional leaders such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, recent years have witnessed a noticeable decline in their influence, epitomized by the deafening Israeli silence in response to the Beirut Arab League declaration, as well as by the increasingly skewed and thus ineffective role at promoting intra-Palestinian unity. In such an internal and regional context, Turkey has walked through a door left wide open.

Turkish foreign policy in Middle East today is undoubtedly more proactive and multi-dimensional than in any period of Turkey's republican history. This is partly due to domestic changes in Turkey, but partly also due to broader transformations at the regional and international levels. The question is what can Turkey achieve in the Middle East?

Turkey's potential in mediation

Turkey has positioned itself as a mediator in the region. It's most well known mediation efforts involved Israel and Syria, dating back to January 2004. This culminated in four rounds of indirect talks via Turkish shuttle diplomacy between May 2008 and December 2008. According to both sides, greater progress was achieved than ever before. The climax came at a dinner between Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and his Israeli counterpart Ehud Olmert on 23 December 2008, in which the launch of direct talks appeared to be in the offing. Five days later Israel launched Operation Cast Lead on Gaza and the process broke down.

Turkey has also mediated between Israel and Hamas on two occasions, but failed to achieve results. The first was in the aftermath of Hamas' capture

of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in June 2006, when Davutoğlu traveled to Damascus to broker a deal based on the release of Shalit and a group of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The second was during Operation Cast Lead, between December 2008 and January 2009, when Davutoğlu shuttled between Damascus and Cairo in order to persuade Hamas to agree to a ceasefire in return for an Israeli ceasefire and the lifting of Israel's closure of Gaza.

Beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict, Turkey has been drawn into a possible mediation between the West and Iran regarding the Iranian nuclear question. Turkey sought to facilitate 5+1 talks in 2006. Ankara together with Brazil brokered an agreement with Iran in May 2010, even as the United States and the European members of the UN Security Council were attempting to rally support for a resolution on new sanctions on Iran. This agreement stipulated Iran's depositing of 1,200 kg of low enriched uranium in Turkey in one instalment, in exchange for the equivalent amount of fuel by the Vienna group (US, Russia, France and the International Atomic Energy Agency) delivered within a year. The agreement, like Western sanctions, is unlikely to fundamentally deter Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Yet the agreement does represent the only concrete diplomatic achievement regarding the Iranian nuclear dossier.

Finally, Turkey has attempted mediation within the Arab world itself. In 2005 Turkey encouraged Sunni leaders to participate in the national elections in Iraq. In 2008, it supported Qatar's mediation within Lebanon's fractious politics. In 2009 Ankara attempted to reconcile Syrians and Iraqis, following Iraqi accusations that Syria was responsible for the August 2009 bombings in Baghdad. While these mediation efforts have had limited impact, they are symbolic of a Turkish role in the Arab world which would have hitherto been unthinkable.

Turkey's role in mediation is welcome in view of the multiple conflicts in the Middle East, and the paucity of effective mediation. Yet Turkey can only become a credible mediator if it acts in concert with other regional and international actors. Turkey has demonstrated its ability to mediate micro-crises, and can play a useful role as go-between the West and actors such as Hamas, Iran or Syria, with whom the US and EU either have no relations, or have problematic relations ridden by mistrust. Yet its potential is limited

as far as the macro-conflicts in the region are concerned. Turkey played an important role in moving the Syrian-Israeli track forward, and has won Syrian trust and willingness to see Turkey involved in future peace efforts. However this is as far as Turkey can go, but not because deterioration of relations with Israel has written it off as an “honest broker”. The history of mediation in the region suggests that neutrality has hardly been a necessary condition. The principal reason why Turkey’s mediation potential is limited is that Israel, Syria and Turkey all know that a deal can be only be sealed if the US steps in. Israel will not budge unless it is induced to do so by Washington, and Syria will not become involved in a peace process with Israel if it does not offer good prospect of a peace deal, a deal which Turkey, alone, cannot deliver. Likewise, Turkey’s relations with Hamas are important because of the self-imposed lack of US/EU contacts with and influence on the movement. Yet the prime actor calling the shots is Israel, on which Turkey, irrespective of the state of their bilateral relations, has little influence. It is only if and when, both the US and the EU exert their influence on Israel that Turkey’s ties to Hamas can contribute to a positive movement in the Israeli-Palestinian arena.

Turkey’s potential in realigning the Middle East

Another, less evident, yet potentially more important Turkish impact on the Middle East regards the geopolitical and ideational realignment of the region. Turkey offers the prospect of realigning the region by countering revisionist and securitizing trends rampant in the Middle East. In today’s Middle East, states like Iran and Israel, through their rhetoric and actions, raise anxiety and fear. Turkey keeps away from this paradigm by fostering relations with all parties through bilateral relations and regional integration. Countries like Syria see Turkey’s potential in helping them advance their own agenda. Damascus hopes Turkey will help it achieve the double objective of strengthening its hand vis-à-vis Israel, and diversifying its alliance with Iran. On one hand, Syria has important areas of disagreements with Tehran, particularly regarding the growing sectarian divisions in Iraq, and on the other hand, it is conscience of current disunity in the Arab world, and appreciates the role Turkey can play as a route to the West and a promoter of regional integration in the Middle East. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have been less enthusiastic about Turkey’s role particularly in Palestine and intra-Arab affairs. Yet the Turks have generally been accepted in the Arab World, which welcomes the pragmatic and business-savvy nature of Turkish diplomacy.

As a gateway to both Europe and the US, Turkey has become an important meeting and convening spot for the actors of the region.

Turkey thus offers the prospect to unsettle, dislodge and possibly break the dichotomies which have recently poisoned relations in the Middle East. Particularly in the West (yet partly also in the Middle East), the region has been viewed in us/them terms: moderate/radical, western/anti-western, Sunni/Shi'ite, Israeli/Arab or West/Islam. Turkey could help move the region away from these dichotomies by being “moderate” and “Muslim”; “Western” but enjoying relations with “radicals” and “anti-Western” actors in the Middle East; by being predominantly “Sunni” while enjoying relations with “Shi'ite” countries (e.g. Iran), movements (e.g. Hizbollah) and regimes (e.g. the Alawite Syrian regime); by being neither Arab nor Israeli while enjoying relations with both. Fulfilling this potential is no small feat. To the extent that the Middle East is conflict-ridden, Turkey will not be able to improve relations with some without harming its relations with, and raising the suspicions of, others. This said, Turkey does run the risk of achieving little more than switching its alliances. While it is healthy for Turkey's relations with Israel to be dictated by conditionality, it is equally important for the rhetoric of the Turkish Prime Minister not to suggest that Turkey is simply moving to the opposing camp. This may be interpreted as an identity-driven clash that Turkey supposedly attempts to transcend.

Unlike the US and EU, Turkey, as an actor “of” rather than simply “in” the Middle East offers the prospect of realigning the Middle East, and breaking the dichotomies of the past by developing relations with all parties. This does not mean that Turkey's ties with all actors will always necessarily be good. Indeed “tough love” if measured (i.e. not excessive) and consistent (i.e. towards all parties) would mark a welcome difference from Western policies in the region. Yet this potential would be squandered if Turkey were viewed as acting purely according to a “Muslim” worldview rather than in the name of international rights and law.

The Future of Euro-Mediterranean Relations

■ *Ambassador Gamal Eldin Al-Bayoumi* *

The future of Euro-Mediterranean relations will be influenced by a number of pivotal issues, serious dialogue is necessary in order to move these relations forward in a manner which serves the interests of all parties. So far, all initiatives in this respect have been set forth by the European side, the south has only enjoyed the right to respond. It is, in our view, important for Europe to allow its partners south of the Mediterranean larger scope to present their own initiatives, and to have a larger role in decision making. In the following Analysis, we will highlight some of these issues and the south's perspective on them.

Political dialogue, Democracy and Human Rights:

Establishing an ongoing political dialogue among all parties is a central objective of the Euro-Mediterranean relationship, in order to develop and strengthen mutual understanding. This is especially important with respect to issues such as the establishment of peace and stability, the protection of basic human rights, and regional development. In order to achieve this objective, the South must identify areas of mutual interest on which it can take a joint stand with the North. The European side, on its part, must make more of an effort to be an effective player in regional disputes. The EU continues to play a secondary role to the US in this respect, even when it comes to European issues, such as Cyprus or the Balkans.

With respect to human rights the views of all parties, North and South, must be considered. One side should not be perceived to be dictating policies to the other, for if the south does not feel that this dialogue responds to its concerns, it may prefer to walk away. There is a strong perception among southern countries that Europe is attempting to impose its own values, while at the same not showing respect to values prevalent in other cultures. For

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example, the EU condemns the practice of polygamy, a widely accepted tenet of the Islamic faith, as well as a common practice in African cultures, and yet it demands that these cultures show respect for, and acceptance of, the freedom of sexual orientation, same-sex marriage and extra-marital relations.

By the same token, the EU tolerates Israeli violation of article two of the Euro-Israeli agreement with respect to human rights. These violations take various forms, including the export of produce from Israeli settlements on occupied Arab land under false pretense, claiming they are produced in Israel. This produce therefore enjoys a customs free status in Europe, for which it does not really qualify. The EU also takes no action against repeated Israeli attacks on Palestinians in occupied territories, and violations of Palestinian rights which also breach international law.

The European Parliament did discuss these issues, but while recommendations were made, they have not been reflected in the behaviour of European governments.

Freedom of movement and problems of illegal migration:

The problem of illegal immigration to Europe has always been one of the major objectives behind the very idea of Mediterranean cooperation. While demographic imperatives produce a need for increased immigration into Europe, there are understandable fears that an uncontrolled wave of immigration could prove disruptive. As a result of European expansion, and the implementation of Schengen agreement, borders within the EU have disappeared, and immigration has therefore become a common European, rather than a national, problem. Moreover the increasing number of immigrants has had domestic consequences in growing support for right wing political parties that exploit anti-immigrant sentiments in several European countries, including France, Germany and Austria. Various racially motivated attacks have also taken place. These are all worrisome developments from Europe's as well the Middle East's, point of view.

On the other hand, Arab countries are also concerned by the effect of immigration from the new EU member states in the east, to Palestinian territories. These countries have a long history in this respect. The EU must understand that every European who immigrates to occupied Palestinian territories poses a threat to the Palestinians who reside there, increasing the

likelihood they will be expelled from their own land. They will be forced into exile to the already densely populated surrounding Arab countries, such as Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. These immigrants therefore place additional pressure on both Palestinian and Arab lands.

Moreover, the EU position on Israeli settlement policy has been neither consistent nor strong. While the EU previously declared Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territories illegitimate and detrimental to the peace process, it has backtracked on this position, and has even on occasion abstained from voting to condemn this policy in various international settings.

EU policies must strive to distinguish between measures that will help prevent the practice of illegitimate migration, and those that will obstruct the rights of individuals to freedom of movement, in the context of globalization, which implies freedom of trade, and the free movement of investments and services. Constraints on the freedom of movement caused by excessive security regulations would have an adverse affect on free trade.

Terrorism and Threats to Security:

Terrorist acts threaten the interests of states on both shores of the Mediterranean. Some of these acts reflect a sense of despair, arising from the perception that justice is not upheld, and that some parties remain above the law. While poverty does not itself breed terrorism; terrorists do take advantage of poor people. Economic and social development remains therefore the best means to fight terrorism.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles in the Middle East is also an issue of mutual concern. The South feels that the EU entertains double standards in this regard, for while it tolerates Israel's acquisition of such weapons - as well as of nuclear-head bearing missiles with a range that reaches some European countries- it expresses grave concern when any other country in the region seeks to acquire even peaceful nuclear capabilities.

There are further concerns in the south regarding the EU's tendency to take unilateral decisions on matters which affect the Middle East's regional security, such as the decision to establishment a rapid deployment force. While the EU has declared that the force would be deployed for purposes of humanitarian evacuation during emergencies, the lack of transparency or

dialogue regarding this issue leaves room for doubt.

Regional Cooperation:

Regional cooperation is an important tool for establishing peace, and the EU has been supportive of greater south-south cooperation, such as the framework created by the Aghadeer Declaration, which now includes Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. It is also open to the membership of other Arab countries that meet the requirements of the Mediterranean partnership.

A form of regional cooperation that includes Israel remains possible in the context of a peace process, and is linked to achieving a comprehensive and just peace. Any format for regional cooperation including Israel outside the framework of the peace process and without providing for Palestinian rights is a waste of time and doomed to fail. As long as Israeli practices in the occupied territories and violations of Palestinian human rights continue, it will remain extremely difficult to promote regional cooperation that includes both Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Current EU neighbourhood policies, while expanding regional cooperation to include partners in the East, do not satisfy the full aspirations of the Arab south. According to these policies, Egypt may, for example, take part in a joint framework with Israel and the Ukraine, but it would not be possible to include the Sudan or Saudi Arabia. Arab countries find this difficult to accept, feeling that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should take into account their own regional geography. It is hoped that the EU will become more understanding of Arab views in this respect. EU expansion has increased its political and economic power, and although it strives to achieve a unified foreign policy, it has not yet succeeded in developing more effective policies towards regional conflicts.

The EU must expand its outreach to Arab and Islamic countries, and join in regional and global initiatives to promote development, democracy, human rights and rule of law, thereby helping small and medium sized states stand up for their rights. It must also reassure its neighbours to the south that they are not in competition with Europe's east, and that cooperation between all parties is the primary objective.

Arab-European Dialogue within a Regional Framework:

Cooperation on the Arab-European level is now significantly different, in

both content and form, from the Arab-European Dialogue which took place during the 1970's. Arab-European relations are now conducted according to parameters and categories that have been set by the EU, and that do not necessarily reflect Arab priorities. Europe divides the Arab countries into several frameworks of cooperation: there are the Arab-Mediterranean countries with partnership agreement; the GCC group; the lesser developed countries, such as Sudan, Somalia, and Mauritania, who are members of the ACP group and have their own agreements with EU, the Mediterranean Forum which includes Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Greece and Malta; the 5+5 Forum; Aghadeer Declaration member states; and finally, Yemen, Iraq and Libya that have no contractual ties to the EU.

There is a growing need for a more institutionalized format for the management of EU-Arab relations, which would comprehensively include all Arab and all EU states. It is inconceivable that Arab countries do not enjoy the same level of interaction with the EU that is provided by the EU-Latin Dialogue as well as the EU-Asian dialogue, or the European-African Summit. Various European officials have indicated that certain European states oppose such an approach because it excludes Israel.

The EU developed its Comprehensive Mediterranean Policy in the early 1970's, in cooperation with seven Arab countries: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, in addition to Israel. Agreements of cooperation, aimed at promoting political dialogue, and providing commercial advantages and development aid, were signed starting in 1975. During the mid-1990's, the parties began negotiating new agreements in order to strengthen this relationship.

Egypt and the EU initiated their new Partnership Agreement in 2001, and it went into effect in 2004. Tunisia and Morocco had been the first to sign partnership agreements in 1995, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Palestine signed soon after in 1997. It took longer to reach agreements with Egypt, Syria and Algeria. In Egypt's case, this was related to differences between the two sides on a number of issues, especially agriculture, rules of provenance, the liberalisation of imports, as well as on political issues. Algeria still continues to hesitate regarding the liberalisation of its own economy and integration with the global market. This has been reflected in its

attitude towards joining the WTO, as well as the retraction of its support to the establishment of an Arab Free Trade Area.

In Syria's case, effort was necessary to create a domestic base of support for accepting the challenges of partnership. The EU made an unwarranted political error in withholding its finalisation of the agreement with Syria, on the pretext of the latter's stances towards regional developments, such as the Harriri assassination, the 2006 Israeli assault on Lebanon, the 2009 Assault on Gaza, its support of Hamas and Hizbullah, etc. When the EU belatedly decided to finalise the agreement, it had by then lost political support within Syria.

The EU-Egyptian Partnership:

The EU earmarked around 2996 million Euros for development assistance to Egypt during the period 1996 to 2013, divided as follows:

695 million euro for the period 1996-1999,

594 million euro for the period 2000-2006,

558 million euro for the period 2007-2010,

And 449 million euro for the period 2011-2013.

These funds were used for modernising the private sector, health and educational services and vocational training, supporting external trade capabilities, developing the south of Sinai, alternative energy, as well as many other areas. Egypt's partnership with the EU has had tangible results in the area of commerce, Egyptian exports to the EU steadily increased from 5 million 213 thousand dollars in 2004 to 11 million and 894 thousand dollars in 2008, according to Egyptian Central Bank figures.

The EU has also maintained its position as Egypt's most important trade partner during that period. EU direct investment in Egypt also increased from 246 million dollars in 2004 to 5094 million dollars in 2008. The partnership has proved useful to both sides, as Egypt's imports from the EU also increased from 201,9 million dollars in 2004, to 747,18 million dollars in 2008.

Egypt's partnership with the EU has been successful on other levels as well. Relations between the two sides have received increasing attention over the last ten years, and Egypt has benefited from the transfer of know-

how, dialogue and advice. Egypt's closer ties to the more advanced European economy have helped it to improve the efficiency and capabilities of its own economy.

The Partnership Agreements also provides for the fair treatment of citizens of both countries legally residing in Egypt or the EU, and includes bilateral agreements regarding the movement of labour, social security benefits provided by both sides, and so on. The EU also provided Egypt with financing to develop its capabilities in response to these requirements. However, recent EU restrictions on the movement of individuals from south to north have negatively affected the conduct of business between the two sides, even at the official level. EU expansion has given Egypt the benefit of access to a market of around 500 million people, and 27 countries with a combined GNP of over 14 Trillion dollars.

As of 2007, Egyptian imports of industrial equipment from the EU have also been exempt from all charges. This has given EU products a competitive advantage in the Egyptian market, and also is a form of subsidisation of Egyptian producers.

A new era of bilateral relations began in March 2007, when the Egypt-EU neighbourhood Plan of Action was approved by the EU-Egyptian Partnership Council. General Secretariats for EU-Egyptian Partnership have also been established in the Egyptian ministries of International Cooperation, Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Industry, in order to support the implementation of this plan.

Conclusion:

More effort needs to be exerted to build on the achievements so far realized through Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, in order to enhance its benefit for southern Mediterranean countries. It is also important to involve non-Mediterranean Arab countries in this process, in order to prevent the fragmentation of Arab countries into several smaller categories. The EU must also make an effort to ensure that new domestic arrangements aimed at curtailing illegal immigration do not infringe on the rights of citizens from the south who reside in the EU. There are currently millions of Arabs, and around half a million Egyptians residing legally in the EU.

It is important to note that while Egypt's Partnership with the EU has been

successful in commercial and developmental terms, it has not enjoyed similar success regarding social and political issues. The EU has not succeeded in effectively advancing the quest for a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Moreover, the situation regarding the negative image of Arab and Muslims within Europe continues to worsen, as EU states continue to ignore assaults on Islamic symbols, traditions and articles of faith, under the banner of protecting freedom of speech. At the same time, any criticisms of Israel quickly give rise to accusations of anti-Semitism. In order to ensure that new EU initiatives consolidate rather than compromise both Arab and European interests, they must be subjected to a process of serious, credible and transparent dialogue.

What Does the Future hold for the EU's Efforts in the Middle East?

■ *By: Clara Marina O'Donnell **

The Middle East has been a region of major importance to the EU for decades; however, member-states have struggled to fulfil their objectives of supporting peace, prosperity and good governance amongst their southern neighbours. The Lisbon treaty should give more coherence to the EU's foreign policy machinery, but it will not be able to help address some of the broader challenges which have undermined EU efforts in the region. The current economic crisis, including the strains within the Euro-zone, risks creating additional difficulties for the EU in its attempts to stabilise the Middle East.

Not least because of regional proximity, the Middle East – and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular – have been important EU priorities since member-states started cooperating in foreign policy. In 1980, EU governments (then under the auspices of the EC) notably issued the controversial Venice declaration. At a time when the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was viewed as a terrorist organisation by Israel and the US, member-states recognised the need to involve the PLO in peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

In an attempt to support economic development and good governance, the EU has developed extensive bilateral ties with most countries in the Middle East – and it has offered Turkey the prospect of EU membership. The EU has provided development aid and trade concessions. Through the Barcelona Process, and now the Union for the Mediterranean, member-states have also attempted to encourage regional co-operation amongst the various countries in the region. The EU has also been heavily involved in the Middle East peace process: as the largest aid donor to the Palestinians, the EU has led efforts in nation-building, it has trained Palestinian security forces, and it has provided a border monitoring mission on the Egypt-Gaza border. Several European countries also have troops in the UN's monitoring mission on the Israeli-Lebanese border.

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But despite its numerous initiatives, the EU has failed to make significant progress towards its foreign policy objectives across the region. Poverty remains prevalent in many Arab countries bordering the Mediterranean. The pace of political reform has been slow. And the various conflicts which plague the Middle East remain. The EU has at times been criticised for responding too slowly to events, and for failing to show united strategic leadership. Governments in the Middle East have often been confused by the numerous representatives speaking on behalf of the EU, particularly as their message has sometimes been contradictory. Until 2009, the European Commission and the Council were both involved in setting the EU's foreign policy. Senior representatives from both institutions have often held different views, not least on certain details of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition, member-states have sometimes deviated from the EU's official position. For example in July 2007, the foreign ministers of ten Mediterranean member-states wrote an open letter to the Quartet Representative Tony Blair declaring the failure of the roadmap. In doing so, they broke the official EU line which argues that the roadmap is the key instrument for guiding the Middle East peace process.

The new Lisbon treaty should help the EU in its efforts to play a role in the Middle East. The treaty, which entered into force at the end of 2009, should strengthen the coherency of the EU's message abroad. A new institution is being set up, the External Action Service (EAS). The EAS will merge the officials who previously worked on foreign policy for the European Commission and the European Council. The head of the organisation – the High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy – will represent both the Council and the European Commission. The Lisbon treaty will also help the EU be better represented on the ground across the Middle East. In the past, the European Commission had offices in most countries – with several officials focusing on political matters – but the Council only had one official covering the Arab-Israeli conflict based in the region. With Lisbon, European Commission delegations are becoming EU delegations forming part of the EAS. Not only will they be able to provide the High Representative with extensive analysis, but by reducing the amount of EU interlocutors, they will make it simpler for local partners in the Middle East to engage with the EU.

But the treaty cannot solve all the problems which have blighted the EU in

its attempts to foster stability and good governance in the region. EU efforts have often been hampered by a lack of political agreement amongst member-states, and their reluctance to let the EU speak on their behalf. Such challenges are likely to remain. Member-states have often disagreed on aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including recently on how to respond to the Goldstone report, as well as concerning the conditions under which the EU would be ready to engage with a Palestinian government of national unity. For years, EU governments disagreed on whether to offer Syria deeper bilateral ties. And several member-states have voiced their opposition to the possibility of enlarging the EU to include Turkey.

Member-states have often been keen to maintain bilateral relations with key players in the Middle East, diluting or sometimes contradicting the EU's official position. The fact that EU governments preferred not to choose amongst their most senior statesmen when naming the EU's new High Representative for foreign affairs, implies member-states are still not ready to have their foreign policy channelled mostly through the EU.

The Lisbon treaty will also not be able to address a second set of problems which have hampered EU efforts. These result from the difficult conditions in the Middle East. Firstly, the disputes which plague the region, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict are very complex. The EU might not have succeeded in encouraging Israelis and Palestinians to make progress towards peace, but neither have the US, Turkey or Egypt. Secondly, most Arab states do not perceive significant democratic reforms to be in their interest, making it much harder for the EU to encourage such reforms in this region than it was in Eastern Europe during the 1990's.

So notwithstanding the improvements to its internal apparatus, the EU will continue to face significant challenges in its attempts to help the Middle East become more stable and prosperous. Moreover, Europe's economic troubles could make matters worse. After the financial crisis in 2008, and a recession in 2009, member-states have been trying to prevent a sovereign debt crisis – which has engulfed Greece – from spreading across the EU. Euro-zone members are providing generous loans to Greece, austerity measures are being introduced across the EU, and there is much talk about the need to introduce stronger regulation of the Euro-zone.

The need to address the economic crisis risks distracting EU member-

states from their efforts to set up the EAS and from challenges further a field, including in the Middle East. Commentators often accused the EU of not focusing sufficiently on global challenges during the negotiations which led to the Lisbon treaty. But the temptation for the EU to focus predominantly on internal matters will be much stronger at a time when European countries are tackling the worst economic crisis in decades and the euro-zone is under great strain. In addition, disputes about how to improve economic governance are creating tensions between member-states, notably France and Germany. If such tensions worsened, it could hamper other areas of EU cooperation, including foreign policy.

As EU member-states make significant cuts to their public spending, they might find it difficult to maintain current levels of economic aid to their southern neighbours. At a time when unemployment in Europe is rising, fears amongst voters about competition for jobs might also make it more problematic for EU governments to offer other benefits which are of interest to countries in the Middle East, including trade concessions and less stringent visa requirements. Concerns about job security could also increase opposition to Turkish membership within some quarters of European public opinion.

Finally, if the euro-zone crisis worsens, it could undermine the credibility of the reforms advocated by the EU. In order to spread stability and good governance across the Middle East, the EU places an important premium on the rule of law and it encourages its neighbours to adopt many of its own rules – be it in order to regulate their economies, or ensure the respect of human rights. But if the EU's economic model is seen as failing, or member-states are seen as disregarding various aspects of EU legislation – by allowing state aid or breaking the conditions set out by the growth and stability pact – the EU's reform agenda will be appear less attractive to its southern neighbours.

As a result, EU member-states must ensure that they manage the current economic crisis effectively, not only for the internal wellbeing of the EU, but also for the credibility and effectiveness of its foreign policy.