

NATO & South Mediterranean in Search of a Concert for Moderation, Cooperation and Peace

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I. Introduction

Classic theory of international military alliances has claimed that alliances are made in order to balance, deter, and attack foes, if necessary, and to defend the vital national interests of its members. NATO, for sure, has been the classic case. Up to the end of the Cold War in 1989-91, NATO succeeded in balancing and deterring the USSR and its Warsaw Pact communist allies. In the post Cold War period, however, NATO has had to change its concept of operation to deal with a fundamentally changing and uncertain world. NATO operations in Bosnia and Kosovo testified to a new world that put challenges on the alliance's original concepts. NATO had to change, and change it did. NATO's "New Strategic Concept" – approved in April 1999 at the Washington Summit – is aimed at adapting to a changing environment that is characterized by the increasing primacy of soft security concerns.

This is the context within which the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue was established. At their Brussels summit in January 1994, the NATO Heads of State and Government proposed considering measures for promoting dialogue, understanding, and confidence building between the Alliance and the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. On February 8 1995, the North Atlantic Council invited Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia to participate in the initial round of the Mediterranean Dialogue. In November 1995, Jordan was invited to join the Dialogue¹, and on March 8 2000 Algeria accepted the Council's invitation to become the seventh Dialogue country. On July 8 1997 the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG) was created at NATO's Madrid Summit. This decision marked a further step in NATO's policy to enhance its relations with non-NATO Mediterranean countries.

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¹ Antonio Marquina, "Review Of Initiatives on CBMs and CSBMs in the Mediterranean", in: Hans Brauch & others (eds.), Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for the 21st century, London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 67.

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue is part of its overall cooperative approach to security. It is a component of the broad framework of regional security cooperation complementing other efforts such as those of the EU, Western European Union (WEU) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Dialogue is closely coordinated with the United States (US) as the leader of NATO, initiator and co-sponsor of the Madrid conference and the Middle East peace process. Its permanent military presence in the Mediterranean and in the Gulf has allowed the US to act sometimes unilaterally in this area and to launch independent security initiatives.

The objective of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue has been primarily political – to achieve a better understanding of NATO's policies and activities while simultaneously exploring the security needs of the Dialogue countries. Information exchange and partnership are two key components of the initiative, taking into account the political, socio-economic, cultural and religious diversity of the Mediterranean region. Pluralism and a prevailing complex security environment in the Mediterranean require partnership and cooperative approaches. NATO's Mediterranean approach follows the long experience in Eastern Europe where multiple initiatives and institutions such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace Program, the Permanent Joint Council with Russia, and the NATO-Ukraine Commission have been established.

In a way, the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue, like others in Central and Eastern Europe, has been one of those strategic moves to deal with the post-Cold War strategic and political environment. Somehow it has also been a response to the changing strategic environment in the South Mediterranean and the Middle East at large because of the second Gulf War and the subsequent Arab-Israeli peace process. The Gulf War of 1991 had a considerable impact on the Mediterranean security environment. The political and military power concentrated during this war revealed many social and security risks in the area. The Arab-Israeli conflict, though important, was not the only dominating confrontation in the region. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles appeared considerable. The Gulf War stressed the fragile stability of the region and the urgent need to deal with its flash points.

On the other hand, the Arab-Israeli peace process presented an opportunity to deal with the fast growing problems of the South Mediterranean and the Middle East. The magic wand of global transformations in the 1990s touched the Middle East. The Second Gulf War and the end of the Cold War changed the attitudes of the major parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, a window of opportunity was opened for the whole region. And the opportunity was not missed. Through active American diplomacy, the Madrid peace process started in October 1991 and, by 1994, a Palestinian-Israeli agreement and an Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty were in place.

What was important about the new Arab-Israeli reconciliation process was that it introduced a geo-economic dimension to its traditional geopolitical concerns of territory and security. In addition to the bilateral negotiations, another layer of negotiations was added – a multilateral one to discuss five issues of interest to the parties: arms control, water, refugees, economic cooperation, and the environment. This was followed by a host of initiatives to accelerate development and cooperation in the Middle East, the most notable of which were the series of economic summits and the EU Barcelona process. Shimon Peres, the current Israeli Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister presented more elaborate visions to the concerned parties in the region. In his book "The New Middle East", he argued for a new way of thinking and moving of the economy of the region "From an Economy of Strife to an Economy of Peace".

By 2002, this vision had not been achieved. More importantly, the global strategic environment has once again been transformed as a result of the events of Sept. 11th 2001 in the United States. Since then, the world has largely been defined by the shock waves that emanated from the attacks in New York and Washington. The terrorist attack on America and the consequent US military attack in Afghanistan seem to have shaken the warm shelters of common wisdom and conventional thought in the world. This lightning fast series of events looked like a melt-down of the global reactor with the world trade center in New York at its core.

The attacks of Sept. 11th in New York and Washington have sparked changes in the world system that are not easy to fathom at this stage. They are still unfolding on the global stage. The threat of terrorism has caused a great deal of concern in the West. It is not yet known whether these attacks will produce a different world and how much it will impact on NATO's security priorities. It seems clear, however, that the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region will be in the focus of these events. The suspects are from the region and the "root causes" of the crisis are clearly linked to the region's security dilemmas. Fighting global terrorism might dominate the international political scene including the NATO security agenda in both Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

This paper is aimed at discussing NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue in the post Sept. 11th era. In this respect, the paper will set the record for the progress achieved in the Dialogue; offer an understanding of the events of Sept. 11th; argue for the need to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict as a key for the advancement of the Dialogue; and finally contribute recommendations to further cooperation between NATO and its Dialogue partners in the South of the Mediterranean.

II. The Record of the Dialogue

The Dialogue is another name given to the NATO Mediterranean Initiative. The soft diplomacy on the surface does not hide the Initiative's geopolitical realities and hard security core. These realities have always been present in the past and will continue to prevail in the future. Economic interests and energy security are two key issues in NATO's Mediterranean policy. Protecting access to energy resources in the Persian Gulf and in North Africa has always imposed power projection requirements on the US and on NATO allies.

Since its start in 1995, the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue has been based on the following principles²:

- The Dialogue is progressive in terms of participation and substance, allowing additional countries to join and the content of the Dialogue to evolve.
- The Dialogue is bilateral in structure, making it less vulnerable to disruption due to political developments in the region.
- All Mediterranean partners are offered the same basis for cooperative activities within a non-discriminatory framework.
- The Dialogue is meant to reinforce and complement other cooperative international

²Jette Nordan, "the Mediterranean dialogue: Dispelling misconceptions and building confidence", NATO Review, Vol. 45, No. 4, July- August 1997, p. 28.

efforts such as the Western European Union (WEU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

- The activities within the Dialogue take place on a self-funding basis, with the exception of certain information activities.

The first political discussions between the allies and individual Dialogue countries took place in late 1997, followed by another meeting in October 1999. Although the Dialogue is predominantly bilateral, multilateral meetings also took place, particularly in the form of information sessions and briefings for officials from Dialogue countries. During NATO's operations in Kosovo, representatives of the Dialogue countries attended sessions with regular briefings on the political and military war situation.

Information has been a key component of the initiative, facilitating mutual understanding between NATO and Dialogue countries. The exchange takes the form of conferences, seminars, and visits. Another important step for exchanging information was the establishment of "Contact Point Embassies". Other practical Dialogue activities have covered institutional fellowships, civil emergency planning and programmes of scientific cooperation.

NATO has supported a series of conferences and seminars for representatives from NATO and Dialogue countries. The first of these was held in Rome in November 1997 for top-level representatives, and co-sponsored with the Italian Centro Militaire di Studi Stragici (CeMiss). On that occasion, a RAND study on NATO's Mediterranean Initiative – Policy Issues and Dilemmas³ commissioned by the Italian Ministry of Defense – was presented to NATO's top political and military authorities, as well as representatives of the Mediterranean Dialogue countries and other organizations.⁴

A follow-up international seminar was held in February 1999 on "The Mediterranean Dialogue and the New NATO" at Valencia.⁵ It was organized by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense, together with the Spanish Center for International Relations, and the NATO Office of Information and Press.⁶ While the Rome Conference helped to identify the practical cooperative dimensions of the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Valencia conference was the first opportunity for ambassadors from NATO and the six Mediterranean partner countries to meet to discuss jointly the way ahead.⁷ The NATO Defense College in Rome organized three other seminars, one with Jordan in December 1998, the second with Tunisia in October 1999, and the third with Egypt on "Mediterranean Security" that was co-sponsored by the NATO Defense College and the Egyptian Nasser Higher Military Academy.

In 1998, NATO invited for the first time the Mediterranean Dialogue countries to participate in the Institutional Fellowship Program introduced in 1956 for citizens of NATO countries. The aim of this programme is to promote research leading to publications in areas

³Stephen Larrabee & others, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: policy issues and dilemmas, Santa Monica: RAND, 1997/1998, p.1-107. see also: www.rand.org/publications/mr/mr957.pdf.

⁴See: "The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative", Proceeding of the International Conference Jointly organized by RAND and Centro Militaire Di Studi Stragici (CeMiSS) and co-sponsored by the NATO Office of Information and Press, 10-11 November 1997.

⁵Stephen Larrabee & others, NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: policy issues and dilemmas, op.cite.

⁶ NATO Press Release (99) 22, 24 February 1999.

⁷Javier Solana, "The New NATO and the Mediterranean", in: Maurizio Coccia (ed.), the 50 years of NATO seen from the Mediterranean region, Rome: Rubtino, 1999, p.14.

of particular interest such as alliance security and political issues.⁸ Following the pattern for partner countries in Central and Eastern Europe, five fellowships were awarded in 1998 to scholars from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania and Morocco. Their research included: East Mediterranean security, economic aspects of security cooperation in the Mediterranean region and competing security and cooperation visions in the Arab world.⁹ In 1999-2001, four fellowships were awarded to Mediterranean Dialogue countries from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Morocco.¹⁰ An Egyptian scholar carried out a study on “Common challenges to the Levant: Cooperative Security in the Middle East after Peace”¹¹ at the NATO Defense College in Rome in the framework of its International Fellowship Programme.

The first NATO Defense College Flag Officer course specially intended for Mediterranean countries started in Rome on 20 April 2001 with the participation of all NATO allies and senior military officers from Egypt, Israel, Mauritania and Tunisia. The course was meant to promote understanding of NATO’s interests and capabilities and offered opportunities for professional and personal networking among participants.¹²

Other information activities have included visits by parliamentarians, opinion leaders, academics, journalists and officials from Mediterranean Dialogue countries to NATO Headquarters. For example, representatives from Egypt of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies (October 1998), from Mauritania of the University of Nouakchott, and from Tunisia of the Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies visited NATO Headquarters. Parliamentarians from the committees of foreign affairs and defense from Dialogue countries were also invited to Brussels for briefings in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001.

The interest of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (then North Atlantic Assembly or NAA) in the Mediterranean started before the Dialogue initiative was launched. Since the early 1990s, the NAA has focused on the Mediterranean as a key component of the European security architecture. Between 1992 and 1994, two sub-committees visited Israel, Egypt and Morocco. This was followed by three seminars on security cooperation in the Mediterranean.

A series of Mediterranean Dialogue Seminars were organized under the auspices of the new "Mediterranean Special Group" (MSG) with the participation of legislators from NATO, Dialogue and non-Dialogue countries, and international organizations. The first seminar was held in Paris in March 1995, and was followed by similar meetings in Lisbon (Dec. 1996), Istanbul (Nov. 1997), Cairo (Dec. 1998) and Cordoba (April 1999). Three Dialogue countries were given an observer status in the NAA: Morocco and Israel in 1994, and Egypt in 1995. In April 1997, the MSG, together with members of the parliaments of Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia, and a group of observers from international organizations and academia, visited the headquarters of NATO's Southern Regional Command, AFSOUTH, in Naples. This visit was the first ever by non-NATO Mediterranean countries. The parliamentary dimension of the NATO dialogue is intended to improve the

⁸NATO Academic Forum, Fellowships, Brussels, May 2001, at: www.nato.int/acad/fellow/00-02e.htm.

⁹Albirto Bin, “NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue”, paper presented in Halki International Seminar: The Emerging Security Environment in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, 12-16 September 1999, p. 9.

¹⁰ NATO Press Release (99) 091, 1 June 1999.

¹¹Osama F. Mekheimer, “Common challenges to the Levant: Cooperative Security in the Middle East after Peace”, Monograph Series, No. 11, Rome: NATO Defense College, 2002.

¹² NATO Press Release (98) 44, 20 April 1998.

public image of NATO in the South, which often extends only to the political elite.¹³

In 1998, NATO's foreign ministers decided to establish "Contact Point Embassies" in Mediterranean Dialogue countries. A similar system has been successfully operating in Central and Eastern European partner countries since 1992. With this system, NATO is represented in each Mediterranean partner country by the embassy of a member nation. The programme has been fully operational since January 1999.¹⁴

Mediterranean Dialogue countries have been invited to participate in several Civil Emergency Planning (CEP) activities, including courses at the NATO School in Oberammergau on civil-military cooperation in response to natural or man-made disasters, as well as conferences and seminars in Portugal, Austria and Hungary. Visits to Dialogue countries have also been organized to strengthen cooperation in this field. The Greek authorities and NATO cosponsored a seminar on natural disaster reduction in the Mediterranean basin held in Athens in November 1998. The event was a forum for exchange of information, professional and personal contacts among civil emergency planning experts from NATO members and Dialogue countries. A similar event focusing on "Search and Rescue in Disasters" took place in Turkey from September 30 to October 2 1999.¹⁵

Through the NATO Science Program, Mediterranean Dialogue country scientists have participated in NATO-sponsored advanced research workshops, advanced study institutes, collaborative research grants and science fellowships. For example, in 1998 a Greek and an Israeli scientist co-directed a workshop in Israel on the subject of "unconventional optical elements for information storage, processing and communications", in which scientists from Jordan and Morocco also participated.¹⁶

The military dimension in the NATO Dialogue Work Programme includes the observation of sea and land exercises of both NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries, visits to NATO military institutions, exchange of staff officers, and participation in workshops and seminars. Visits of representatives from Dialogue countries to NATO's Standing Naval Force in the Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED) have also taken place.

A military programme was specifically designed for the Mediterranean Dialogue countries that includes three components: courses at the NATO School in Oberammergau, courses and other academic activities at the NATO Defense College in Rome, and specific activities to be conducted under the responsibility of Allied Command Europe (ACE) and Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT). Students from Dialogue countries are regularly sent to attend courses at the NATO School in Oberammergau on environmental protection, peacekeeping, multinational forces, conventional arms control implementation, civil-military cooperation, civil emergency management, crisis management, and European security cooperation. In 1998 the NATO Defense College in Rome organized its first international research seminar on Mediterranean security that aimed at increasing understanding between experts in security studies from both NATO and its member states and from Mediterranean

¹³Pedro Moya & Andria Cellino, "dialogue with the Mediterranean region: scope for improvements and expansion", in: NATO Parliamentary Assembly Defense and Security for the 21st Century, at: www.atalink.co.uk/nato/html/p089.htm

¹⁴ Albirto Bin, "NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue", op.cite., p.10.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

Dialogue countries. A similar event occurred in October 1999.¹⁷

The two major NATO commands: ACE and ACLANT have offered 34 (1998) and 49 (1999) military activities to the Dialogue countries. These included observing PfP activities in areas of search and rescue, maritime safety and medical evacuation, as well as exercises related to peace support and humanitarian relief. Yet Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have participated in NATO's peace support operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina under IFOR and SFOR, that is, outside the context of the Mediterranean Dialogue. After the Egyptian battalion's withdrawal in 1998, Jordanian and Moroccan troops have remained involved in NATO-led KFOR operations in Kosovo.¹⁸ Other military exercises have also been conducted:

- Exercise Cooperative Osprey 2001: Approximately 150 military personnel from 19 nations participated in this multinational NATO Command Post Exercise in Canada (March 2001). The Exercise was conducted from March 1-9 at the Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Center in Clementsport, Nova Scotia. Three Mediterranean Dialogue nations participated as military observers (Algeria, Jordan and Mauritania).¹⁹

- Submarine Safety Exercise Poseidon 2001: to adopt common safety procedures and understanding to minimise the risk of submarine accidents. The exercise consists of a seminar and computer-assisted training in two phases from June 11-15 2001 and from September 17-21 2001. Representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia have been invited²⁰.

The Egyptian Taba Battalion arrived in Sarajevo in 1992 as members of UNPROFOR, and later served under IFOR and SFOR. While serving as members of those forces they performed 2,464 reconnaissance patrols, 121 joint patrols and 311 site inspection operations. The hospital of the TABA battalion treated 57,876 patients. They were instrumental for the restoration of 18 km of gas pipeline in Sarajevo, 2 km of water pipes, and they provided over 13 tons of food to the local population²¹. The size of the Egyptian battalion was decreased gradually according to the requirements of its tasks, and ended its mandate at December 1998²².

The first Jordanian peacekeeping unit came to Sarajevo in February 1996. In addition, Jordan had four battalions deployed in Croatia and Slovenia²³. Morocco has participated in NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Mostar since 1996. In late 2001, they were still serving there but their number was reduced in March 2000 to 1000 troops²⁴.

¹⁷Alberto Bin, "strengthening cooperation in the Mediterranean: NATO's contribution", NATO Review, Vol. 46, No. 4, winter 1998, p. 27.

¹⁸Giulio Mario Terracini, Security in the North African Region, report for the Mediterranean special group, Brussels: NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 17 September, p.16, at: www.naa.be/publications/comrep/1999/as139gsm-e.html

¹⁹"Exercise Cooperative OSPREY 2001", NATO IMS Press Release, 27 February 2001.

²⁰"Cooperative Poseidon 2001: NATO announces Submarine Safety Exercise", NATO IMS Press Release, 18 May 2001.

²¹"SFOR bids farewell as Egyptians prepare to leave BiH", SFOR INFORMER Online, SFOR Informer # 47, 28 October 1998.

²²Mohamed Kamal El-Din, "Egypt-NATO Cooperation in the Nuclear Dilemma", in: Dieter Ose & others (eds.): security and stability in the Mediterranean security, Rome: Nato Defense college, 2001, p.90.

²³"Jordanians on exercise", SFOR INFORMER Online, SFOR Informer #24, 26 November 1997.

²⁴ Ibid.

In December 1998, NATO foreign ministers agreed to explore ways for enhancing cooperation with Dialogue countries. Based on the Washington Summit in April 1999, heads of State and Government decided to enhance the political and practical dimensions of the Dialogue. These include increasing the frequency of political discussions, offering additional opportunities for meetings with ambassadors, and encouraging Dialogue countries to organize events similar to the conferences in Rome and Valencia. On the practical side, enhancing existing activities implied more regular visits and on-site briefings to the partners by NATO teams or by senior Alliance officials. In 2000, military cooperation has increased. NATO has established direct links between its International Military Staff and the armed forces in the Dialogue countries. For the first time, a military conference took place in Brussels among military authorities of NATO and from all Mediterranean partners²⁵.

During a NATO seminar in Valencia in February 1999, RAND presented a report²⁶ that offered a few policy recommendations:

- To reinforce the non-governmental dimension.
- To consider the establishment of a NATO Mediterranean defense studies network.
- To build the region's security agenda to include terrorism, energy security, refugee flows, civil emergency planning, and WMD proliferation.
- To move towards practical, PfP like defense-related activities;
- To make the parliamentary activity a formal part of the Initiative.
- To increase the funding of the Initiative.
- To conduct, where possible, some existing bilateral defense exercises within the Initiative.
- To consider establishing a crisis prevention and confidence-building network for the Mediterranean²⁷.

On April 24 1999, NATO's Washington Summit Communiqué strongly confirmed, "the Mediterranean Dialogue is an integral part of the Alliance's cooperative approach to security" and welcomed the development of "broader and deeper co-operation and dialogue with the countries in the Mediterranean region". NATO enlargement could also acquire a southern dimension. An eventual Southern expansion, according to RAND, "would further dilute NATO's traditional focus on central Europe and open new possibilities for engagement in the South"²⁸.

It has to be said that all the activities mentioned above are in addition to the bilateral cooperation that takes place between states of the South Mediterranean and NATO member states. Egypt is a good case in point. Egypt has organized a broad program of joint military exercises with EU and NATO countries. From a confidence-building perspective, joint military exercises strengthen ties between countries and personnel of the forces involved. It

²⁵Giulio Mario Terracini, Security in the Middle East: A Changing Environment, report for the Mediterranean special group, Brussels: NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 17 September, p.16, at: www.naa.be/publications/comrep/1999/as139gsm-e.html

²⁶Ian Lesser & others, the future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Evolution and next steps, Washington DC: RAND, at: www.rand.org/publications/mr/mr1164

²⁷Giulio Mario Terracini, Security in the North African Region, report for the Mediterranean special group, Brussels: NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 17 September, op.cite, p.24.

²⁸Ian Lesser & others, the future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Evolution and next steps, op.cite, p.20.

progressively helps to unify language, terminology and concepts required to carry out joint operations. Continuity and regularity of a specific series of joint exercises generally lead to the creation of some kind of institutions for planning, assessing, and administrating the work.

The multilateral Bright Star joint exercise in which Egypt has played a central role since 1981 is now the largest outside NATO. Conducted every two years, Bright Star 2001 involved 12 countries among them eight NATO members: US, Egypt, France, UK, Germany, Italy, Greece, Netherlands, Kuwait, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates and Spain. In Bright Star 97, Egypt and UK exercised a rescue operation for a large-scale earthquake disaster in the city of Alexandria with losses assumed to reach 10,000 inhabitants. The experience gained came to fruition during the earthquake tragedy in Turkey, where Egypt and other Mediterranean countries provided help and solidarity²⁹.

Another important example has been the Cleopatra series of joint naval exercises in the Mediterranean that were launched in 1988 by Egypt and France, which Italy joined in 1996. It includes joint planning, war games, lectures, debates, and seminars. The principal naval missions exercised are fighting against terrorism, rescue operations, fact-finding, ship inspection and monitoring³⁰.

III. The Shock of September 11th

Although it is early to assess the impacts of the events of September 11th over the global and regional systems, it is possible to assert that no form of international behavior can escape the impact of that fateful day. The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue is no exception. The world will have to approach the novelty of the ensuing events focusing on the more structural aspects of the phenomena rather than the more temporary or superficial ones. In the Mediterranean region, it is still too early to decide what impact the September 11th events have had. However, one can detect ten points that will define the agenda for the world security in general and the Mediterranean region in particular.

The first point is that the current situation in the world is an extraordinary one by all means. The World Trade Center attacks were not a traditional act of war, comparable to the French-German war in WWII or the allies' destruction of the German city of Dresden or the Japanese destruction of the Chinese city of Nanking. And vice versa, the American-British military actions against Afghanistan are not a traditional act of war either. Afghanistan's land and/or wealth – if any – are not up for grabs by more powerful nations for material or strategic reasons. And the “war” against Afghanistan is entirely different from America's war against Vietnam, which was as traditional a war as any that could be fought during the Cold War period.

Rather, the situation could best be understood in terms of a phenomenon-conflict, not a traditional international conflict among nation states. The US embodies the phenomena of modernization and globalization, while Afghanistan represents the phenomenon of parochialism and anti-globalization with terror as its outward expression. The war, thus,

²⁹ Al Ahram Newspaper, 3 November 1997.

³⁰ Mohamed Kadry Said, “how Egypt thinks Mediterranean? Joint military exercises and regional security cooperation”, paper for the seminar on: the Future of the Euro- Mediterranean security dialogue, institute for security studies (ISS), west European Union, occasional paper, no. 14, 2000b.

whether on New York or Kandahar, is not a traditional war, it's a new form of international interaction, bound to have unexpected results and Promethean implications and consequences.

The second point is that what has happened since September 11 is still in a very early stage of formulation and evolution. Most notably, the means of mass destruction available to world terrorism could still be in their Bronze Age. Shocking as it was, the destruction of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon could only be a first step towards more destructive targets, and ruthless terrorist acts. The world has hundreds of nuclear power plants, thousands of airports and railway stations, and countless sites for chemical and radioactive materials that could be easy targets for terrorism. The maniac anthrax mail in the US and Argentina and several other countries is but an example of biological terror that could sabotage agricultural and food products, and manipulate the well-being of 6 billion people, vulnerable to cruel terrorist insanity.

The third point considers the sources of terrorism. The mail terrorism after the air terrorism indicates that the sources of terrorism are diverse. It is thus a major fallacy to attach terrorism exclusively to Islamic fundamentalism. The world is indeed full of chauvinists and racists, both in developed and developing countries. What binds all these trends is a profound resentment against the current intermingling of races and peoples through the process of globalization. In addition, there are the anarchists, who see the process of globalization and the changes it entails for both production and exchange as harmful for both developing and developed countries. At the tail end come the old leftist terrorist organizations, e.g. the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army in Japan, Bader Meinhoff in Germany, and the Black Panthers in the US. And alongside all of these, is the evil of organized crime in drug trafficking and money laundering. These issues, which were previously considered "soft" security issues, will have to rise up the ladder of priorities to receive similar attention to "hard" core security issues. Some even argue that they will have civilizational dimensions between Islam and the rest of the world.

The fourth point reveals the increased vulnerability of the modern nation-state, not only to the destructive effects of terrorist actions, but to the spillover effects of these acts from one field to another, and one place to another. Thus, the costs of the attacks in the US are far greater than the direct 40 \$billion cost. The loss could reach trillions of dollars in world economic stagnation, and the direct losses in the sectors of tourism, insurance and aviation. The most serious effect terrorism might have could ironically be in the very means of combating terrorism. Since September the 11th, the world's most liberal countries have introduced multiple legislation and procedures to restrain previously guaranteed civil liberties. Thus, a stagnating world economy with very few prospects for mobility and betterment, and enormously disadvantaged and hopeless people would be and even easier prey for further terrorism. In other words, the security approach of combating terrorism and protecting globalization could eventually be self-defeating.

The fifth point is that as a result of all these new aspects of terrorism, the function of combating terrorism has become highly strategic, no longer a matter of policing or marginal security concern. Terrorist actions now do not target individual embassies, boats or buildings, where casualties do not exceed tens or even hundreds of victims. The new terrorism could inflict damages and losses comparable to small-scale wars. This is not to say that terrorism has become a threat to nation-states' existence and regional integration, rather that terrorism has turned into a threat spawning mass fear that could eventually eliminate the core values of entire civilizations. This will open the gates for much more fundamental issues about the function of the nation-state and its ability as a social organ to protect its citizens.

The sixth point is that the assumption that terrorism is related to poverty is under serious question. One cannot find a single terrorist from sub-Saharan Africa, or Bangladesh, or even Afghanistan in the last acts of terrorism. The poor generally do not have the potential or even the will to change the world. Terrorism has shown to be affiliated with middle income countries that are unable to achieve socio-economic take off. Or it is affiliated with developed countries where traditions of conservatism generate racism and anti-state terror. In the near future, this will call for a serious reexamination of political and economic reform policies in developing countries and review of conservative thought in developed countries.

The seventh point is that the war against Afghanistan could unleash a series of changes in the world system. It does not take much speculation to gather that the settlement with the Irish Republican Army is directly correlated with the British-American war in Afghanistan. But again this is not to say that all conflicts are liable to easy settlements under such circumstances. Indeed, protracted conflicts have the ability to reproduce new kinds and forms of adversity, e.g. the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the conflict in Kashmir.

The eighth point refers to the US. Although it is early to judge the magnitude of change the US is undergoing, certain observations come out clearly through the experience since September 11th. Previous to September 11, the slowdown in the US economy was not perceived as a threat. After a whole decade of extraordinary boom, the slowdown was predictable if not desirable. Thus the unilateral behavior in world affairs of the new US administration was not entirely astonishing. The US was determined to pass its missile shield project despite opposition from both enemies and allies, and seemed to be relapsing into a kind of isolation in international affairs taking shelter in its wealth, power, and long believed internal security. The events of September 11th seem to have deepened this trend. Some American strategic thinkers started to argue that the US should act alone if necessary to protect itself and the world. In fact a growing trend of anti-multilateralism has become highly influential in American security circles³¹.

The ninth point refers to ambiguity not only in defining victory or defeat, but ambiguity regarding what is the kind of justice required. The world has to examine this moral dilemma. While the US is justified morally to fight to bring the perpetrators of terror to justice, the world will face the moral problem of extending the same rights to other nations faced with massive terror. More important moral questions are going to be asked when “preemptive” strikes against Iraq are contemplated and when concepts of justice are grounded in the gray areas of “terror” and “resistance” as the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The tenth and last point is concerned with the kind of “expressive” terrorism that was unbound on September 11th. A kind of terrorism, which has no political or social objectives. Terrorists in this case do not claim a ransom or a political target, but rather aim at inflicting mass fear on the widest possible scale. This kind of terrorism and its use of high tech to inflict mass fear and destruction opened the eyes of the world to the “other side” of globalization and technological progress. The liberal thought has consistently celebrated globalization with all its manifestations of the free movement of capital, labor, ideas, and thoughts. The new non-state actors associated with globalization, namely the MNCs, the NGOs, the Internet, and others, seemed to break the coercive monopoly of the nation-state, and thus to open new horizons for world freedom and interaction. The new terrorism however, has shown that the nation-state is vulnerable to less benevolent non-state actors, e.g. terrorist networks, organized crime, and others. These new actors have no organizational or geographical entity. They do

³¹See: Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness”, Policy Review, summer 2002.

not abide by even the most elementary rule of international relations, and nonetheless they are not subject to either deterrence or retaliation and punishment. The danger of these irrational actors is that they do not know the simplest cause/effect relationships, i.e. they do not care about the costs and benefits of their actions.

These ten points will affect the Mediterranean region traditional security concerns in terms of definitions and solutions. They have complicated an already highly complicated pattern of interactions between NATO and its Mediterranean Dialogue countries. The events of September 11th have created reciprocal apprehension in the West and in Arab and Muslim countries. This has all added to the long list of security issues in the Dialogue and redefined the challenges facing the Mediterranean.

The major challenge confronting the Mediterranean has been the economic and military disparity between the North and the South. A significant impediment to any cooperative security in the Mediterranean is the asymmetric level of institutionalization and cohesion: integration among Northern EU and NATO members and disintegration and fragmentation among the 12 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. In addition to all these problems there have been a host of issues that separate the North from the South that include different threat perceptions, priorities for solutions of regional problems, positions regarding WMD.

The majority of Dialogue and cooperation initiatives in the Mediterranean, including the NATO Initiative, face a paradox of priority. Europe and the US believe that political dialogue, discussions and information exchange come first to build confidence and to stimulate and develop constructive cooperation. They point to all the major developments associated with the end of the Cold War, from German unity to NATO's relationship with Russia, as always beginning with "dialogue". The development of the CSCE, in their view, which began tentatively as a forum for discussion across a geographically and ideologically divided Europe, is a vivid example of how dialogue can be an effective tool of change³².

Arab countries, on the contrary, prefer to start with hard issues, particularly when matters are related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. They also point to European experience and argue, "the experience of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Europe has indicated that such measures could only do its function under state of strategic balance between the parties concerned and after reaching final agreements on border disputes"³³. The Arabs' "half hearted" participation in the activities of the Barcelona Process and the NATO Dialogue Initiative is a mere response to the negative Israeli attitudes in the Middle East peace process.

This difference in perspective has stood as a barrier against developing constructive thinking for the region's future. The experience gained so far has proved that the future agenda of security cooperation in the Mediterranean is practically hostage to the Middle East peace process. The failure to put the security charter of the Barcelona Process on the agenda of the Marseilles conference in November 2000 is a case in point. The Egyptian postponing of a multilateral meeting to be held in November 2000 at ambassadorial level within the framework of the NATO Dialogue because of the crisis in the Middle East is another

³²See keynote address by the Deputy Secretary-General of NATO at the seminar co-sponsored by Rand and NATO, 16 October 1995, at: www.nato.int/docu/speech/1995/s951016a.htm.

³³ Mohamed El-Sayed Selim, "southern Mediterranean perceptions of security cooperation and the role of NATO", in: Hans Brauch & others (eds.), *Euro-Mediterranean partnership for the 21st century*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 135.

example³⁴. It is now clear that the security initiatives launched by the West remain insufficient in seriously influencing the Arab-Israeli peace process. In fact the opposite happens, the deterioration in the peace process sometimes blocks the channels of communication and renders progress in these initiatives difficult, if not impossible.

IV. The Centrality of the Arab-Israeli Dispute

The previous analysis shows clearly how the Arab-Israeli conflict has complicated sometimes and hindered at others the smooth relations between NATO – and EU – and the South Mediterranean countries in general and Dialogue countries in particular. For sure the events of September 11th have complicated the picture further. With many Arab “Mujahdeen” coming to the fore in the attacks in New York and Washington, a host of issues have appeared to add civilizational and cultural dimensions to a situation that is already complicated by historical realities. The war in Afghanistan, the war against terror, the potential war against Iraq, and the Palestinian Intifada against the Israeli occupation have defined lines of differences between NATO and its Arab interlocutors.

Of all, the Palestinian issue stands on the Arab side as the criterion that measures the sincerity of the West, NATO in particular, in the dialogue to deal with common security concerns. In fact, the Arab-Israeli conflict in general, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular have been at the intersection of a multiplicity of security issues that include terrorism, Iraq, WMDs, and even drug trafficking. And because of this centrality, it is essential to evaluate the current stage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This can be done by asking the following questions: Where are we now? How did we get here? Where are we going? Where should we go?

Where are we now?

There are two ways to evaluate the post March 29th situation in the Palestinian-Israeli interactions. The first is to look at it from the perspective of the immediate present, and the second from the long-term perspective if the present situation continues.

The immediate present can be described as a state of natural conflict wherein the parties of a decolonization process have failed to come to grips with the realities of history and power capabilities. Nature took its course in the Palestinian-Israeli interactions when both sides decided to rely on force to achieve their national objectives. The reasons for this sad state of affairs are not of concern at this point. What is more important is to know that the leaders on both sides are convinced that use of massive military force, on the Israeli side, and of suicide bombing, on the Palestinian side, will continue the Israeli occupation for Israel and achieve the de-occupation for the Palestinians. Both have the smell of victory, total victory, if only they can wield a bit of more violence: one more suicide bombing, or a few more of them, will make the Israelis withdraw unilaterally, as they did before in Lebanon and one more Israeli sweeping of the Palestinian territories will end Palestinian violence and relinquish their demands.

³⁴ Giulio Mario Terracini, Security in the Middle East: A Changing Environment report for the Mediterranean special group, op.cite.

Of course none of this can be realized, both parties should know that one more suicide bombing or one more sweeping operation will not achieve their goals. So the Israelis have started to talk about the transfer of Palestinians and 46% of the population agrees. Some of them would not only transfer the Palestinians in the West Bank but also those inside Israel. (Some of the transfer is taking place. It is estimated that 150,000 Palestinians have left since the Intifada).

On the Palestinian side, another dream is emerging which involves the transfer of the Israelis, not to the sea but to the US or the West. Hamas people proudly refer to the fact that 1 million Israelis have left Israel because of the resistance and suicide bombing. (With the exception of a few thousand rich Israelis, 15% of Israelis are always abroad for work in Western countries or family attachments).

More important still, the state of nature has prevailed over the state of reason. Look at the current situation in which violence and nature are on the initiating side. Suicide bombing delayed until June 24th the long waited for American initiative. It took the Arab side a year and a half to act and come up with an initiative, a positive one indeed, but its credibility was overshadowed by a suicide bombing operation in Natania and the Israeli sweeping operation on March 29th, and so on.

Nature took over reason, and violence took over negotiations. The definition of victory has been reduced from achieving national goals (secure and safe homeland for the Jews and an independent state for the Palestinians) to how much pain the other side is feeling. The more statistics show human and physical loss on the other side, the greater the satisfaction of getting closer to the goal of national vendetta. Instincts have come to the fore and politics have disappeared.

The long-term prospects

The cost for both Israel and Palestine is unbelievably high if psychological and emotional damages, plus the lost opportunity costs are calculated. Let's go back in history and see the dynamics of similar colonial disengagement.

- 1-When the British failed to grant the liberal and secular Wafd party independence in Egypt and the deoccupation of Egypt from 1923 to 1952, they produced Nasser and the radicalization of the country and the region for the next three decades, actually still up to now in some ways.
- 2-Doing the opposite in India and giving in to the Congress Party gave the world a democratic and secular India.

The failure of the Palestinians to deal with Barak and the failure of the Israelis and the US to deal with Arafat ushered in Sharon as the leader of mainstream Israel; who knows who will be the successor of Arafat in the Palestinian territories. In fact, both sides have targeted the forces of moderation on the other side. Suicide bombings have been heavily directed against civilians who are the bread and butter of peace. Sharon's efforts are not against the infrastructure of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, which remain intact, but against the Palestinian Authority.

This systemic destruction of moderation has led the Palestinians and Israelis to a state of nature. This will have a wide and long-term impact in the region. Four years passed between 1948 and the coming of Nasser. The eradication of confidence in the moderate regimes will lead to radicalization in the region for decades to come. The Iranian regime before the revolution was accused of corruption and not living up to the standards of democratic systems, the regime was discredited and we have now had three decades of revolutionary upheaval, a long war in the Gulf, destabilization of the Middle East, and the possibility of producing weapons of mass destruction.

How did we get here?

There are three ways to look at the present situation in Palestinian-Israeli interactions.

First is that the state of nature in the Israeli-Palestinian interactions is part of the Middle East state of nature in which a region that has 8% of the world's population has known 25% of the world's conflicts since the end of World War II³⁵. The region has not matured to follow the global developments of globalization, democracy, and in short, progress. In a way, the Middle East is still living in a state of nature in which power is the defining factor for politics. The history of the region will attest to this reality. In no other region in the world, could a peace process like the one in the Middle East, with all the investments of global and regional powers, fade away with losses to all parties concerned. Only the Middle East, with its lack of progress, could remain in a state of prolonged conflict where original sins remain unforgiven.

Second, the present crisis in the Middle East is a byproduct of recent developments in the post-Camp David II summit in July 200, and major deficiencies in the Oslo peace process. A resolution of the current crisis should address both.

The deficiencies of the process are:

1- the philosophy of the process is based on gradualism and the mutual learning of the honest intentions of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to coexist peacefully with one other. Although this philosophy might have certain merits, it gave those who oppose the process on religious or historical grounds the opportunity to sabotage it through settlement policies or violence. This will be even truer when dates and timetables are not respected.

2- the frame of reference for the entire process, which is Resolution 242 and land for peace, was often ignored in the negotiations to reach agreements, the negotiations to implement agreements, and the negotiations to implement every item in the agenda.

3- there has been a structural imbalance in the negotiations. Israel has secured itself a position of superiority in conventional and non-conventional weapons that led to a negotiation for peace in the Middle East under the threat of use of massive military power. Under such conditions, any Israeli concession is considered generous even if it is far less than what the Palestinian side would accept.

4- there is an obsession with geopolitics over geo-economics of the present leadership and élites of the region. For them, history is defined in terms of the past not in terms of the future. There is no parallel in the Middle East for the founding fathers of the European Union.

³⁵ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Management of ethnic issues in the Arab world", Strategic Papers, No. 26, Al- Ahram Center For Political & Strategic Studies, February 1995, p.4.

5- the peace process has always been a government-to-government business while civil society has been absent altogether. Even when normalization was envisioned, it was so in terms of economic gains that might inspire Arabs and Israelis to accept each other. However, both peoples are not merely economic animals that look for gains in the open market of global capitalism. Nor do they indulge only in the pursuit of happiness to the point that they overlook historical and cultural complexes that controls their lives.

6- the US has been the major, if not the only, player mediating the peace process. The US, because of domestic politics, cannot be a fair player. The presidential cycle has also added a complicating factor to the sustainability of American efforts. The events of September 11th have added a highly complicating factor to the US role in the Middle East. If the Cold War were the prism through which the US looked at the Middle East conflict in the past, the war on terrorism is now having the same negative effect.

These deficiencies have prolonged the peace process and created diplomatic fatigue on all sides. The conditions under which the Palestinian people has to live have become intolerable with no light in sight at the end of the tunnel, particularly after the Camp David II summit ended without an agreement. The blame put by the US administration on the Palestinian leadership for the lack of success has made the Palestinians feel that they face the hard choice of either living in isolation or accepting what they cannot accept regarding their basic values in Jerusalem and the refugees issue. This blame on the Palestinians, on the other hand, made the Israelis feel that their 'generosity' in the negotiations was not reciprocated. Sharon's visit to the Islamic holy cites in Jerusalem sparked the current crisis that led to the Palestinian uprising and the corresponding rage in the Arab world. The Israeli people, on the other hand, elected Sharon to form a center-far right government in February 2001.

Third, instead of looking at the Middle East as a region still living in a state of nature, or as region that is living in a post-peace process failure, the area can be looked at as living through a process in which the parties to the conflict are bargaining not only at the negotiating table but also in the battle field to improve their positions. In spite of the recent crisis in the Middle East, the general deterioration in the peace process in the last few years, and the freeze on the activities of the multilateral negotiations that came out of the Madrid conference, the situation in the Middle East has witnessed noticeable progress that could not be imagined a few decades ago.

The conflict has been transformed from an existential conflict into a conflict about how the Arabs and Israelis can live with one another. Even the thorny Palestinian track has achieved some progress in most of the issues of the Camp David II summit and the last negotiations held in Taba, Egypt, in the last week of January 2001. Both parties have recognized that they are closer to an agreement than at any time before. In fact, the current crisis could be perceived as an attempt by both parties to improve their bargaining position in the final mile of the negotiations.

Where are we going?

For good or for bad, President Bush's speech of June 24th has become the defining framework for politics and diplomacy in the Middle East in the near future. Israel's and the Arab states' acceptance of the American initiative has put it on the table for bargaining and,

hopefully, for implementation. However, from an Arab perspective the speech had major conceptual problems:

First, the main problem with the peace process is envisaged in the speech to be the corruption and inefficacy of the Palestinian Authority and not the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Hence, change and reform of the Palestinian Authority becomes the key to changing the current stalemate in the Middle East.

Second, the victim of the current situation is defined as the Israeli population, who cannot live safely because of terrorism, whereas Palestinian suffering becomes a result of the Palestinian leadership's inability to achieve peace and democracy.

Third, resolving the conflict in the Middle East entails establishing the Palestinian State, but this is dependent on the capacity of the Palestinian people to choose leaderships 'non compromised by terror'.

Fourth, the settlement will be a gradual process over three years, during which the Palestinians will be under consistent testing, so if the violence stops in that period, they get a temporary state, and if cease fire persists longer, they could get a permanent state. The peace process again will be hostage to every fanatic in the region.

Fifth, ignoring the historical background and the evolution of the conflict in the Middle East, the US and its allies deal with the conflict on the grounds of the current war on terror. Thus, no matter how just the Palestinian cause might be, promoting the cause with violent means or resistance in any form, is unacceptable.

All these five concepts could be criticized on the moral grounds of justice and history and the factual grounds of the recent developments in the conflict, since the beginning of the second Intifada. These concepts could also be criticized on practical grounds; the return to the gradualism in resolving the Palestinian cause in a manner that puts only one side - the Palestinian people - under scrutiny is highly impractical. Who can guarantee that radical Palestinian movements will be tolerant for such a long and gradual process in the face of Israeli provocation and with very little incremental progress? Moreover, it puts the radical movements on both sides in the driving seat for deciding over the future of the process, which would probably lead to its collapse in the same fashion as the collapse of the Oslo agreements.

However, the operational side of the speech is no less problematic. It has maintained the two-state solution, negotiations to complete the Oslo process to the final status agreement in three years; it has kept the Israeli withdrawal from "the occupied Palestinian territories" in exchange for peace. It has envisioned more specific roles for the international community, the Quartette in particular and moderate Arab states, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. The road map and the timetable were left up to diplomatic and political efforts to formulate. In reality, as expected, the removal of Arafat has overshadowed the rest of the American initiative. In a way it could disintegrate the initiative and cause its final collapse. Israel did not waste time and returned to re-occupying the Palestinian held territories, and dismantling the infrastructure of moderation, political as well as economic. For the Palestinians, Bush's speech has become not part of the solution of the Palestinian problem, but rather a cover up for taking it back to where it was in 1993. Exactly where the state of nature was most prevailing.

Where Should We Go?

We know where we will go if nature continues to have the upper hand over reason: the continuation of deadly violence with far-reaching consequences and radicalization of the region plus the compounded failures of reform and the globalization of the Middle East.

A different future could be drawn if there were leadership. Imagine what would have happened if the US had not come up with a policy of containment for communism, or had not worked for the recovery of Europe in the post World War II period? Or what would have happened in the Middle East if Egypt under President Sadat had not launched the peace process? The fate of the world and the Middle East would have been much worse, much more terrible and infested with wars, revolutions, and upheavals of all sorts in magnitudes unknown to the history of humanity.

If that is the case, interested parties should actively work harder to restore calm and bring the parties from the brink of war to the possibilities of peace. The continuation of the state of nature is not inevitable. Political and human choice is still possible. What is needed is to build a coalition of moderation to substitute violence with negotiations. Bush's speech has referred to the composition of this coalition, the Quartette and moderate Arab states. This coalition has the following assets to utilize:

The first asset is the Egyptian and Jordanian peace processes which are living proof of the long lasting rewards of peace; namely the return of occupied territories, and a commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Thus, all kinds of instigation to a more confrontational stance by radical Israelis and Arabs have not succeeded to make Egypt or Jordan announce a diplomatic boycott or open its borders for suicide bombers against Israel. Moreover, both Sharon and Hizbollah have failed to open a new war front in Syria, and cease-fire has persisted since the Collin Powell's visit to Israel, Lebanon, and Syria last April. The lesson is that there are limitations for the expansion of the current state of nature at least in the near future.

The second asset for the coalition of moderates is the Palestinian and Israeli citizens who want to live in peace. Despite the bloodshed since Sept. 2000, public opinion polls in Palestine and Israel all indicate that the majority of the population on both sides still favors the peace process. Israeli polls have shown increasing acknowledgement of the impossibility of a militarily imposed resolution of the conflict. On the Palestinian side also there is more acknowledgement of the futility of suicide bombers targeting civilians, as a means to advance the national interest.

The third asset is an emerging consensus over a historical compromise which responds to the minimum requirements of both parties; i.e. Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, equal exchange of 3% of the land, and establishing the Palestinian state with East Jerusalem minus the Jewish quarter and the wailing wall as its capital, whereas West Jerusalem plus the Jewish quarter and the wailing wall becomes the capital of Israel, and a just settlement of the refugee problem that does not deny the right of return, while preserving the Israeli demographic balance at the same time.

The fourth asset for such a coalition of moderates is the international support for a peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict. This support has become more institutionalized through the Quartette; the US, the EU, Russia, and the UN.

The fifth asset for the moderate coalition is the Arab initiative supported by Egypt and Saudi Arabia which are, in fact, the backbone of the Arab world. Saudi Arabia has informed the US that it will be willing to implement the normalization process with Israel upon signing a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel could have normal relations with the majority of Arab states upon accepting withdrawal from the Arab occupied territories in 1967.

The sixth asset is the deterrent nightmare scenario, as mentioned above, if the current developments persist in the future. Hence, radical Israelis could adopt transfer policies, and if worse comes to worst, they could consider using tactical nuclear bombs, whereas internal developments in the Arab countries could not be controlled giving rise to radical movements.

For the moderate coalition these assets are not bad to start with in order to change the current events. What are needed are will and courage and a better use of time. The anti-peace forces are determined, well organized and, so far, have emotions, history and religious fanaticism on their side. This needs to be changed by a sustained effort from the US and its moderate partners to do the following:

First, create a starting point for an international initiative led by a concert of powers that is ready to exert rewards and punishments. The long awaited international conference is due now, as soon as possible. The conference should chart the road to peace and create mechanisms for monitoring the process. It is also possible that this conference could resume where the 1996 Sharm El- Shiekh anti-terror conference left off. The conference could be one of the tools to fight terror through international and regional cooperation. It is essential not only to fight terrorism but also to de-legitimize it.

Second, create moderate partners among the Palestinians and the Israelis. Moderation will not result from the removal of Arafat; most likely, extremism will prevail. Arafat's nationalist credentials are also important for the future completion of a peace treaty. However, change is possible along two tracks: the ruling team in the Palestinian territories and the constitutional reforms that will give Arafat nominal powers. Of no less importance is the need for change in Israel. Sharon will not make peace. A break in the government is necessary. An alternative should be created. The key to such an alternative is international insistence on an immediate halt on Israeli settlements and the start of negotiations.

Third, a more detailed Arab plan needs to be announced and defended in the Arab media. Suicide bombings must be de-legitimated, particularly those inside the Green Line. The issue is not to condemn the suicide operations that have already taken place, but to de-legitimize them as being against the Palestinian cause.

V. Conclusions and the Role of NATO

There are moments in history that are more important than others are. They usually make what comes after significantly different from what came before. There were such

defining moments in the world and the Middle East after World War II, the end of the Cold War, and now after September 11th. Now is the time to act to change the course of history in the Middle East and the world. Failure to do so will be a submission to the will of nature. And when nature takes its course, all parties lose. What such a loss would entail is already evident. Palestinians are deprived not only of their national goals but also of the basic necessities of life. In fact, life has become not much more rewarding than death. Israelis are not much better. Walls now surround the national dream of a safe and accepted homeland. Israel is increasingly becoming the largest Jewish ghetto in history. Other regional powers are totally entangled in a conflict that has resisted solutions so far, their national agendas are delayed and extremism is ready for attack. The future looks dim indeed. Now is the time to change this future. It is time for a long-term vision not short-term management of events. It is time for strategy not tactics. It is time to deal with history in terms of the future not in terms of the past.

The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue fits into this posture. Its mission is to build a strategic understanding among the Dialogue countries on the overall issues of security in the Mediterranean. The key is the Arab-Israeli conflict and its resolution. It has to be remembered that the design of the peace process in the 1990s involved much more than tackling the territorial and geopolitical problems of the Middle East. It included institutions for the reconstruction of the region around the ideas of cooperation and development. Of no less importance, the multilateral process included a framework for Regional Security and Arms Control (ACRS) and, as mentioned above, the Sharm El Shiekh anti-terror summit in 1996 formed the first anti-terror multilateral effort in the region and beyond. This entire legacy could be part of the Dialogue to pave the road for a much more meaningful partnership. In a way, NATO Dialogue can act as a preparatory institutional forum for the Quartette and for the future reconstruction of the region and the relationship between NATO and South Mediterranean countries.

Less ambitious goals will not meet the dangers and the ominous security concerns of the current global situation after September 11th. NATO and Mediterranean Dialogue countries should be contributing to the building of the coalition of moderates in the region. If NATO has contributed to the stability of Europe, and the world, through its relations with Russia, with Central and Eastern European countries, and the stabilization of the Balkan region, it can do the same with the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

So far the Dialogue initiative has accomplished significant achievements. It became an important vehicle for information-sharing across the Mediterranean and developed into a useful confidence-building forum, especially after the creation of the Mediterranean Contact Group. It has provided a context for practical cooperation, and greatly increased the interest for the understanding of Mediterranean security within the Alliance. The Dialogue also created "contact" structures both inside NATO and in the Dialogue countries that allow for the accumulation of knowledge, information and experience and also on-job training for officials on non-traditional issues in a multinational environment. The creation of the Contact Point Embassies and the enhancement of military-to-military contacts have increased the opportunity to create a realistic image about the others, necessary for establishing healthy relations.

The NATO Dialogue showed its ability to grow by inviting Algeria to participate, thus opening the door for further enlargements. To guarantee a successful Dialogue, all states of the southern region should gradually join, including Libya, Syria, Lebanon and even Iran, Iraq

and the Gulf countries. The example of the CSCE has shown that the conference's approach of not excluding any state ultimately bore fruit after many years of dialogue. The NATO Dialogue should not encourage polarization; it should be permanent, regular and institutionalized.

Extending the NATO Dialogue to parliamentarians added new dimensions of people-to-people contacts and provided the participants with knowledge and sensibility on security matters. This dialogue channel kept a degree of freedom from NATO and extended communication and cooperation to other international bodies.

The participation of Egypt, Jordan and Morocco in NATO's peace support operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina under IFOR and SFOR added an important cooperation area between NATO and the Dialogue partners. This kind of cooperation could be extended to other places for crisis management and tension control such as the Middle East. According to Field Marshal Hussein Tantawy, Egyptian Minister of Defense, "the Egyptian participation in peace-keeping in Bosnia stems from its belief in the importance of stability in this part of the world, and also the importance of cooperation between the states of the Mediterranean"³⁶.

The Mine Action Programmes can provide the NATO Mediterranean Initiative with an important project for improving visibility. Humanitarian de-mining has become an integral part of peace operations and peace building. In the Mediterranean region, there are several mine hot spots. There are mines deployed in Egypt, Lebanon, and Cyprus, along the Greek-Turkish borders, the Israeli-Jordanian borders and in other places. In Egypt there are about 17 million land mines and dangerous objects left over from the Second World War by Britain, Germany and Italy, three NATO member countries. These mines – in addition to being dangerous – are also an obstacle to the economic development of entire areas. A recent RAND study recommended that NATO could coordinate integrating the mine clearing efforts of member countries in Egypt as an activity undertaken within its Mediterranean Initiative³⁷.

For the Dialogue to move towards new horizons of cooperation and partnership, it should tackle future NATO orientations of its power-projection with air power. Other issues that should also be mutually discussed are the implications of the new "Defense Capability Initiative" (DCI), NATO's European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), ballistic missile defense (BMD) and the reorganization concepts of NATO Allied Force South (AFSOUTH). Practical ideas for North-South CBMs in the areas of WMD and ballistic missiles should be initiated. They must be symmetrical, creating not only obligations for countries in the South but also in the North. Compared with other security or military cooperation activities, including those by the US and other European countries, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue has kept a low profile. Early perceptions were mixed, between criticism and acceptance. However, the content and final goals of the initiative often remained unclear. There were also some early reactions by conservative analysts that see NATO as a tool for potential Western intervention. They fear that NATO is looking for a new enemy to legitimate itself in the post-Cold War period and that Islam and fundamentalism may become that enemy. The comment by former NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes suggesting that Islam had replaced Marxism-Leninism as the main alliance concern in the post-Cold world, has not been forgotten in the South.

Other scattered perceptions developed over time. These criticized the initiative as

³⁵ Al Ahram Weekly Newspaper, 12 October 1995.

³⁷ Giulio Mario Terracini, *Security in the Middle East: A Changing Environment*, op.cite., p. 4.

lacking a clear concept of Mediterranean security, being selective by including pro-Western countries and ignoring others like Syria and Libya, and also for its focus on soft security issues that are viewed as intelligence operations or as attempts to monitor the capabilities of these countries. Most of these perceptions were shaped by events during the Middle East peace process and flourish in time of crisis with Israel. The concept of Dialogue and confidence building is seen in this context as idealistic, soft and illusive and leading nowhere, reflecting a "Crisis of Idealism in the Middle East"³⁸.

The NATO Dialogue was launched in January 1994 as a response to “the historic opportunity offered by the progress in the Middle East peace process”, as was stated by the heads of states and governments at NATO’s Brussels summit. This influence continued with the ups and downs of the peace process, yet the Initiative survived and enlarged. The NATO Dialogue was not unique in this linking. The peace process also affected other fora like the MENA summits. Most Arab countries, including Egypt and Morocco, boycotted the last Doha summit in Qatar. The problem was not that the Arab Dialogue countries were not willing to attend meetings with Israel but they protested against an endless non-productive “dialogue”. Fortunately, the low profile of the NATO Initiative in the media has allowed it to survive, but it has not been without temporary problems.

Since the lack of progress in the Arab-Israeli peace process has been the major reason for slowing down both initiatives of the EU and the NATO, the two institutions should consider a more active role in conflict resolution. This can be realized through changing the current approach on the basis of a firm strategic understanding between Europe and the US on the Middle East similar to that with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The purpose of this strategic understanding should be the faithful implementation of the agreements that were mediated and approved by both Europe and the US and by the majority of the international community. The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue can make incremental progress over time interrupted by the changing times of the Middle East conflict. The work for a coalition and a concert of moderates to solve the conflict and reconstruct the Middle East is the only way to make a strategic breakthrough. The post-September 11th world is in need of such a breakthrough to prevent a slide into a civilizational clash that would only benefit radicalism, fundamentalism, and instability.

³⁸ Mohamed Kadry Said: crisis of idealism in the Middle East: the Nuclear Dilemma”, paper for the Pugwash meeting 262, 7th Pugwash workshop on: the Middle East, Palestine, Israel and the peace process, Alexandria- Egypt, 26- 28 April 2001.