

**System-opening and  
Cooperative  
Transformation of the  
Greater Middle East  
A New Trans-Atlantic  
Project and a Joint Euro-  
Atlantic-Arab Task**

– Ludger Kühnhardt –

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*System-opening and Cooperative Transformation of the Greater Middle East  
A New Trans-Atlantic Project and a Joint Euro-Atlantic-Arab Task*

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## Chapter I

It is impossible to predict what will be the course of world politics in the twenty-first century. Possible trends have to be extrapolated from past experience. And yet potential quantum leaps in science and technology, for example, are entirely unpredictable; indeed, no other development could have been less foreseeable in the early days of the twentieth century. Will mankind again witness comparable developments in science and technology over the next decades? Will they revolutionise health and energy supply, demographic patterns and the geographical distribution of success and failure? Will nuclear fusion become possible, with revolutionary consequences for the energy needs of a growing world population? Will food, water and health services match rising global demand? Will territorial conflicts arise as a result of unbalanced distribution of resources and wealth? Will migratory patterns, mostly involuntary in nature, have an impact on world stability, as was the case during much of the twentieth century? Will the two demographic giants, China and India, accompany modernisation with a sustainable relationship between homogeneity and pluralism, democracy and stability? Will Africa catch up developmentally and in response to globalisation?

Whatever future of the twentieth century, world order is not a given. It will change as it always has done in the past.<sup>1</sup> During the twentieth century Europe was at the heart of the struggle for world order and the root cause of world disorder. This chapter in world politics came to a close with the unique transformation of Europe into a continent of democracies, market economies, integration and cooperation. America's commitment made this transformation possible and gave rise to an exceptional Euro-American success story. It gave sense and value to the notion of an Atlantic civilisation. Transatlantic relations have become the strongest element of global stability and the most successful expression of trans-regional prosperity and peace in the world. The enlargement of the European Union (EU) and NATO laid the foundations for lasting Atlantic peace and prosperity, for democracy and security from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. While Euro-Atlantic relations with the Ukraine, Russia and Turkey are still evolving, they are most likely to follow the path of 'inclusion' that emerged after the end of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup>

The greatest danger for Americans and Europeans today comes from threats emerging from outside of Europe.<sup>3</sup> The danger of Americans and Europeans becoming victims in big numbers results more from terrorism and rogue and failed states in the Greater Middle East than from any threat – real or potential – within Europe. Dealing with this strategic challenge to stability and security in the Western world will be the most crucial test put to this generation of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. This is true where the resolution of a new set of problems is concerned, but also as regards the ability to reinvent transatlantic relations as a cornerstone of a stable and prosperous world order. This new challenge should be seen as a great opportunity to revitalise an 'Atlantic civilization' and to change the relationship between the Atlantic partners and the countries and people in the Greater Middle East through a cooperative system-opening transformation of that region.

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Kaiser, *Zeitenwende. Dominanz und Interdependenz nach dem Irak-Krieg*, *Internationale Politik*, 58, 5, 2003, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Hüseyin Bağcı, Jackson Janes and Ludger Kühnhardt (eds.), *Parameters of Partnership: The US-Turkey-Europe*, Baden-Baden, 1999; Jackson Janes, Oleg Kokoshinsky and Peter Wittschorek (eds.), *Ukraine, Europe, and the United States: Towards a New Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture*, Baden-Baden, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Here I agree with Asmus and Pollack. Ronald D. Asmus and Kenneth M. Pollack, *The New Transatlantic Project*, at: [www.policyreview.org/OCT02/asmus\\_print.html](http://www.policyreview.org/OCT02/asmus_print.html)

The fierce transatlantic dispute over Iraq – which has generated an internal Western Cold War of sorts – has raised doubts as to whether the Atlantic partners will be willing and able to give a new sense and direction to their common future. Indeed, a new transatlantic project can only emerge from this dispute if both sides are willing to develop a shared understanding of the threat they face and the opportunities that dealing with it together presents over time. A new transatlantic project should not be based solely on dealing with a new threat; it can only succeed if it also defines new positive goals. Transforming the Greater Middle East must therefore be linked to cooperation between the transatlantic partners and the countries and societies in the Greater Middle East. Transforming the Greater Middle East through cooperation wherever possible, and with the help of legitimate deterrence whenever necessary, could become a joint Euro-American-Arab task for the next decades.

There are some obvious preconditions to make a strategic redefinition of a transatlantic project with implications for world peace possible. Any global partnership – indeed, any kind of world order – cannot be based on negative aims alone. Threats and fear may result in deterrence and veto-capacities over the potentially disturbing behaviour of others, but they cannot generate genuine and reliable stability. Such a limited horizon would be self-centered and autistic. On the other hand, putting one's faith only in cooperation and invoking a common interest of survival cannot resolve real conflict and disputes over interests, resources or political goals either. Such faith would be naïf and apolitical. A new transatlantic project for cooperative transformation of the Greater Middle East must therefore avoid both extremes.

Leading the Greater Middle East towards democracy and a market economy does not cover the universe of American or European interests. A positive agenda with both policy-consent and institutional mechanisms is necessary to bind interests in a sustainable way and to establish the limits of partnership with the Greater Middle East. Only such mechanisms make sustainable and successful policies possible over time. A new Euro-American project has to look beyond threat perceptions and, due to its very nature, plan in terms of decades rather than years.

We are confronted with two challenges: redefining the 'frame of mind' of the transatlantic partnership and transforming the Greater Middle East. A differentiated analysis of problems, and a sober assessment of common interests and of the limits of commonality are called for. Different layers of operation and realistic considerations about timing and obstacles are also necessary. We face a challenge in the decades to come that is similar in scope and importance to that which confronted the US and Europe after World War II. We may look in vain for a new Truman for our times, but we must not be caught by the simplistic illusion that the Greater Middle East is the contemporary equivalent of the Soviet Union and any of their leaders the equivalent of Josef Stalin. A system-opening strategy that can generate cooperative structures between the West and the Greater Middle East over time is therefore necessary.

## Chapter II

Differences in transatlantic approaches to new challenges stemming from the cycle of instability from "Marrakech to Bangladesh" (Asmus and Pollack) were intensely debated and experienced during the Iraq crisis in 2002-2003. Power and weakness, wimps and imperialists, asymmetric distribution of hard power and soft power – all kind of arguments and name-calling were traded during American Euro-trashing and European America-bashing. None of this fundamentally destroyed the underlying importance of transatlantic relations.

One can identify two sets of disputes: on the one hand, there are those that are a result of proximity (mainly debates about values and domestic developments). They are a part of trans-Atlantic domestic policy and evidence of the connexion between social and cultural developments on both sides of the Atlantic. On the other hand, there are the disputes that obviously reflect different foreign policy choices and strategic orientations in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11.<sup>4</sup> Both kinds of disputes are interwoven, emanating from differences in interpreting common 'Western' values'. They prove the existence of strong links between the Atlantic partners. This is why the failure to generate a new transatlantic paradigm would be so devastating for the well being of both.<sup>5</sup>

The nature of the crises in the Greater Middle East, and their possible implications for the West, has often been underestimated. In an over simplification, the region has been seen mainly, if not solely, one of failure, threat and chaos, and the potential for a common agenda between it and the West has been underrated. Failed states, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, refugee migration, economic underperformance and political oppression are the key-words used to assess the Greater Middle East, the hotbed of future conflicts that can easily spill over into the West or be directly waged against it. There is also obvious positive potential. There are oil and gas resources, the dynamics of modernising societies, and the potential for joint initiatives to optimise Western and Arab use of resources in favour of the marginal regions of the Greater Middle East and Africa, our common neighbour. The path that Islam will take regarding the challenges and opportunities of globalisation is still unclear, however.<sup>6</sup>

If the US and the EU fail to define a new and lasting transatlantic project, their strategic divorce could be imminent. If both Atlantic partners fail to make the transformation of the Greater Middle East a common interest of the West and the peoples of the region, a strategic confrontation between both or some of its constituent parts could evolve. The dual challenge posed by a new era is enormous: how can it be dealt with best? Much depends on the willingness to honestly analyse the challenge, courageously face implications and consistently work towards turning the challenge into a visible opportunity for all involved. This is what has happened in Europe over the course of the twentieth century. With the end of status quo-oriented crisis management came the pursuit of a strategy of unprecedented success of inclusive transformation of the continent based on common values and political systems. In the end, this benefited all Europeans, including the bitter enemies of the past.

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<sup>4</sup> Roberto Aliboni et.al. (ed.), *North-South Relations across the Mediterranean after September 11. Challenges and Cooperative Approaches*, Rome 2003; Carlo Masala (ed.), 'September 11 and the Future of Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation', *ZEI Discussion Paper C 120*, 2003, Center for European Integration Studies, Bonn.

<sup>5</sup> Ludger Kühnhardt, *Constituting Europe. Identity, Institution-building and the Search for a Global Role*, Baden-Baden, 2003; Jackson Janes, *Transatlantische Brüche? Partnerschaft in Schwieriger Zeit*, Tutzing 2003. On the economic rationale for a continuous transatlantic relationship: Joseph P.Quinlan, *Drifting Apart or Growing Together? The Primacy of the Transatlantic Economy*, Washington, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> See "Islam und Globalisierung", Special edition of *Der Bürger im Staat*, 53, 2-3, 2003, Stuttgart, Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg.

While the Greater Middle East is culturally different and politically highly complex, the challenges are comparable. At root, the challenge is that of establishing a world order through the transformation of regional structures and trans-regional relations. It is one that calls for intellectual honesty, moral and cultural farsightedness, and political leadership by all actors involved. This is why the cooperative transformation of the Greater Middle East will be the most important test case for building order and achieving progress in the twenty-first century.<sup>7</sup>

The Atlantic community – be it the US, the US and Canada, NATO, or either the EU or to the Council of Europe – is clearly marked by a common history and a mutually recognised identity. By contrast, the arch of instability spanning from 'Marrakech to Bangladesh' is less defined and definable. The EU emphasises partnership with the Southern Mediterranean countries, including Israel.<sup>8</sup> The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue includes only pro-Western countries, but is wider than the Barcelona-Process group, as it includes Mauritania.<sup>9</sup> The relations of the US or the EU with the countries of the Arab peninsula, the Middle East strictly speaking (the region of the conflict that has absorbed the world for decades), or with the extended Middle East including Iraq and Iran, are neither identical nor overlapping. There is as much ambiguity regarding the inclusion in the region of the Caucasus region and the newly independent republics of Central Asia, as there is the inclusion of Afghanistan and even Pakistan (not to mention India and Bangladesh). Not all countries of the region are Arab, not all Arab countries are purely Muslim, not all Muslim countries are in the region, and Israel, Turkey and India fit neither category.

Since NATO formally took command of peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan, the rebuilding of the country has been recognized clearly as a common Euro-American task. In that sense, the Hindukush has become the natural eastern border of a region that is undergoing strategic and domestic transformation and is of concern for both the US and the EU. No matter how grave the potential for trouble and how great the opportunities for cooperation the republics of the Caucasus and of Central Asia must be included into the arc of instability. EU Commission President Romano Prodi has talked about an 'arc of stability at Europe's gates' stretching from Morocco to Russia, in which the EU is attempting to play a developmental role.<sup>10</sup> Asmus and Pollack provide a useful point of reference. However, like all geographic lines, the region 'from Marrakech to Bangladesh' falls short of responding definitely and authoritatively to some of the intricacies and contradictions of this vast region. Regions, like conflicts and opportunities, overlap depending on the criteria one emphasises.

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<sup>7</sup> For an intrusive European perspective with policy implications see: Michael Emerson and Nathalie Tocci, *The Rubik Cube of the Wider Middle East*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Calleya, "Is the Barcelona-Process working?", *ZEI Discussion Paper C 75*, 2000, Center for European Integration Studies, Bonn; Felix Maier (ed.), "Managing Asymmetric Interdependencies within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership", *ZEI Discussion Paper C101*, 2002, Center for European Integration Studies, Bonn; Massimo Silvestri, "Le Partenariat Euro-Méditerranéen", *Revue du Marché Commun et de l'Union Européenne*, March 2002, pp.183 ff.; Annette Jünemann, "Six Years After: Reinvigorating the European-Mediterranean Partnership", in: Christian-Peter Hanelt et.al.(eds.), *Europe's Emerging Foreign Policy and the Middle Eastern Challenge*, Munich: Gütersloh 2002, pp. 39 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Sven Biscop, "Network or Labyrinth? The Challenge of Co-ordinating Western Security Dialogues with the Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Politics* 7(1), 2002, pp.92 ff; Mustapha Benchenane, "Les États-Unis et la Méditerranée", *Défense Nationale* 4, 2002, pp. 79 ff.; Thanos Dokos, *NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Prospects and Policy Recommendations*, Athens 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Romano Prodi, "An Enlarged and More United Europe, a Global Player. Challenges and Opportunities in the New Century", *Romanian Journal of International Affairs* 8 (1-2), 2002, p 22. See also: Javier Solana, "A Secure Europe in a Better World", presentation at the the European Council, Thessaloniki, 20 June 2003 at [www.ue.eu.int/newsroom](http://www.ue.eu.int/newsroom), and Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, Brussels, 11 March 2003, COM (2003),104 final.

## Chapter III

There appears to be an Atlantic consensus when defining the 'Greater Middle East', a region that includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. For a number of different reasons, Afghanistan as well as Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgystan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Yemen and Mauritania should be included in the search for a new regional order. The Arab world is the core 'problem area' and should therefore, *strictu sensu*, include Sudan, Somalia and the Comoros, and exclude Israel given differences in religion, governance and economic organisation. However, the prospects of the region will always be conditioned by the very existence of Israel, as will any post-Middle East conflict scenario.<sup>11</sup> As a non-Arab country, a member of NATO and the Council of Europe, and as a candidate for EU membership, Turkey is clearly on the Atlantic side of the equation, albeit involved in certain key ways in some aspects of the development of the Greater Middle East.

More difficult than the issue of geographical delimitation is defining the scope of the Greater Middle East 'problem'. Is it about the war on terrorism or is the latter only one dimension of a deeper structural crisis and a broader set of challenges? How to assess the relationship between the Middle East conflict and the evolution of the Greater Middle East?<sup>12</sup> Even if the most inclusive agenda is adopted, covering all the root causes of terrorism and regime instability, how should the region be viewed in the final analysis? Is it a permanent threat that can only be contained and tamed at best? Is it a region that faces irresolvable problems or a potential partner whose puzzling problems can be fixed? There is little Atlantic consensus regarding these questions. Until recently country and regional experts predominantly addressed these questions. After 9/11 the agenda became the key challenge for Western strategists and policy-makers who often have limited regional expertise. Contradictions and divergent views stemming from domestic considerations in the US or Europe are therefore natural and are likely to continue. One thing is certain, however: the Greater Middle East is no longer a region for regional experts only. For better or worse, it is a region that elicits all kind of feelings in the Western world. Likewise, perceptions of the West and its constituent parts are under intense discussion within the Greater Middle East.

One of the perennial marks of Arab or Greater Middle East discourse about the West is the expression of an obvious inferiority complex. While the West simplifies the Arab or Islamic world as non-rational, aggressive and dangerous, the Arab world perceives the West as superior, arrogant and imperialistic: equal partnership is impossible to achieve. The only source of contemporary pride in the Arab world that is not of a destructive nature seems to be the successful Al Jazeera TV station in Qatar, labelled the CNN of the Arab world. Many in the region are proud of the channel, which has revolutionized the media landscape in the Greater Middle East – not always to the delight of the regimes it unequivocally criticises.

It will be easier to find common ground between the West and the countries of the Greater Middle on practical issues rather than on questions of principle. Incremental progress is the most likely path towards cooperation than full-fledged comprehensive strategies and approaches. The Western ambition to comprehensively transform the whole region will require not just strongly differentiating specific countries, but also specific issues and future prospects. An ongoing obstacle will be the difficulties of finding common ground between 'us' and 'them' when defining common

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<sup>11</sup> For the best analysis of the current situation in the Arab world including Israel by a German-language author, see Volker Perthes, *Geheime Gärten. Die neue arabische Welt*, Berlin, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> On overlapping dimensions in an historical and a structural context see also: Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, London/New York 2003 (2nd edition); about the European Relationship with the Arab world see the older study of Andreas Jacobs, *Europa und die Arabische Welt. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven der inter-regionalen Kooperation*, *Internal Studies* 110, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Sankt Augustin 1995.



interests and the long-term potential of comprehensive cooperation. This asymmetry seems to be inevitable: whatever one might have wished the fact is that the urgent need for a new transatlantic project was imposed upon the West by the attacks of 9/11. The starting point is fear. Rarely has global transformation been driven by academic scenarios of good will according to convenient time frames.

Uniting the US and the EU to implement a project of the above mentioned scope will inevitably cause internal Western debates about priorities and outright power struggles over leadership as with the 'cold war' within the West over Iraq. Nevertheless, there is ample room for common ground, views, action and even interests and goals, and to ensure complementarity where necessary. The quarrel over Iraq was a wake-up call for both sides. Although the Atlantic partnership still stands, it has led to a reshuffling of power within the Western camp, not least within the EU – mainly to the detriment of the role of Germany.

The Atlantic partners must define the challenges and opportunities before engaging the countries and societies of the Greater Middle East. They must be aware of possible reactions and interests of the Greater Middle East for the project to succeed, whether they consult the region's representatives or not. Only a gradual development and implementation is realistic. The most crucial question to be addressed is regarding the definition of nature of the problem. The most obvious definition is the terrorist threat coupled with the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by rogue states or radical groups sponsored by such states.

The root causes of the multiple and interlinked crises in the countries and societies of the Greater Middle East are best summarised in the 2002 UN-sponsored Arab Human Development Report written by 22 eminent Arab scholars.<sup>13</sup> In it the main causes of the crisis of modernisation in the Arab world are lack of political freedom, corruption, economic stagnation, the absence of the rule of law and reliable legal systems, inappropriate market economies, insufficient education systems, and gender inequality. The report has been criticised for various reasons, not the least in the Arab world. However, criticism is part of the process that it was hoped the report would initiate. Public debate about the need to transform the societies and regimes of the Greater Middle East and the Arab world in particular is no longer a taboo. In fact it is becoming a visible part of political developments, as countries waver between resistance and closure and fear of the kind of radical change that could be counterproductive.

There is no other recent report about development in the Arab world that has been more outspoken about the harsh realities of the region. Three quarters of all global oil reserves are located in 13 countries of the Greater Middle East but their people do not benefit from this wealth. The average growth rate of 1.3 per cent is behind that of most other developing regions. Per capita income is shrinking. Yearly population growth rates of 2.5 are higher than that of most other regions and absorb the little economic progress there is. The world economy benefited from 651 billion dollar foreign investment in 2002, and yet Arab countries were able to attract only 4,6 billion, which were, moreover, unevenly distributed throughout the region. This is an under performing region, with 7.5 per cent of the world population but only 2.5 per cent of global gross domestic product.<sup>14</sup> These figures alone should be a source of concern for Europe, as they refer to an immediately neighbouring region.

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations Development Programme/Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, *Arab Development Report 2002. Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, New York 2002

<sup>14</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 216, 17 September 2003, p. 15. The situation among the Southern Mediterranean partner countries of the EU is likewise bad. They generate only about 5 per cent of all direct investments in all developing countries of the world. See: Christian-Peter Hanelt and Felix Neugart, "Die Europa-Mittelmeer-Partnerschaft. Stabilität und Prosperität im Mittelmeer-Raum", *Internationale Politik* 56, 8, 2001, p. 57

All freedom and human rights indices paint a bleak picture of the Arab world. The region gets consistently low marks for political participation, legal security, corruption, stability, transparency, governmental efficiency or the quality of governance. Unsurprisingly, unresolved problems are accumulating in this neighbouring region and endangering European stability. The export of instability to Europe has many labels: illegal and legal migration, the threat of weapons of mass destruction, Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. Lack of opportunities in the region has begun to threaten the stability of the Western world.<sup>15</sup>

This is why the relationship between the West and the Greater Middle East cannot be based solely on deterrence. The Cold War taught us that deterrence may freeze a conflict but it cannot resolve it. However, the relationship between the Greater Middle East and the West is not comparable to the Cold War relationship between the West and the Soviet Empire. There is no Arab equivalent to the Soviet Empire or an Arab Moscow, although Ryad could be a potential candidate. Further, and most importantly, there is no Cold War between the whole of the Greater Middle East and the West. Some analysts see it arising and some even seem to wish for it, but the relationship is much more complex and differentiated than the one that shaped the Cold War.

While there is no Cold War, recent trends debated over the past years indicate the potential for conflict and even confrontation between parts of the Greater Middle East and parts of the West. Thus, the future relationship between the two cannot be based on the promise of cooperation alone. The history of the encounter between the West and the cultures and regions of the Greater Middle East has witnessed as many periods of cooperation as of confrontation. The challenge for today's leaders is to define a framework for a relationship between the Atlantic and the Arab-Islamic civilizations that is broad and forward-looking enough to tap on the potential for cooperation and yet realistic and cautious enough not to neglect deterrence.

The strategy must be based on two pillars: a transformed relationship between the Atlantic civilization and the Greater Middle East to resolve existing problems, threats and obstacles, and internal transformations within the Atlantic civilization and the Greater Middle East to change attitudes towards 'the other'. The Harmel Report of 1967 defined the two-track strategy of NATO *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and its satellites for the following two decades of the Cold War: a similar two track strategy is necessary for the cooperative transformation of the Greater Middle East, which must see well beyond hard security and defence issues to succeed. It must be based on a system-opening strategy equivalent to the one that initiated the transformation of the communist world and its gradual integration into cooperative Western structures.

A two-dimensional implementation is also necessary. The US and the EU need partners in the region and the support of forces that 'aspire to the same changes' (Asmus/Pollack). This could lead to a new variant of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). A Conference on Security and Cooperation between the US, the EU and the countries of the Greater Middle East could be a crucial instrument to intensify a cooperative transformation of the region and its relations with the West. Optimists may see it as the key to system-opening cooperation; for pessimists the outcome of any cooperative rearrangement is the ultimate embodiment of a new regional system. Western strategic thinking must focus on this approach to bring about system-opening cooperation.

A Euro-American-Arab-Israeli Conference on Security and Cooperation would open a debate about the ultimate aims of a common project and about regime change and transformation. It is imperative to understand that the war on terrorism and regime change are not strategic goals in themselves. They are necessary answers to the challenges that became evident after 9/11. They are necessary preconditions to achieve strategic goals. By themselves they cannot be a long-range strategic goal of Western politics. There has been much talk since 9/11 about the need to develop

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<sup>15</sup> In light of this it is astonishing that Europe tends to identify the quarrel over the Greater Middle East as an obsession of the US despite the fact that Europe is much more dependent on Middle East oil than the US. While the US imports 13 per cent of its oil from the Gulf region, Europe is importing 20 per cent; see: Friedemann Müller, "Gas für uns alle", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 194, 22 August 2003, p. 6.

a common threat perception in the EU and in the United States. We need a common threat perception but we also need a common goal for a new strategically important common transatlantic project to succeed.<sup>16</sup>

## Chapter IV

The future and global position of the Greater Middle East must be defined in line with Western interests. The war against terrorism, regime change and structural transformation are tactical issues. The question of final aims must be addressed. The Western world – indeed modern complex industrialised societies as a whole – are both exporters and importers of the effects of globalisation. They depend on successful globalisation and so must deal with a specific domestic reform agenda to manage it properly. Successful globalisation calls for stability, transparency, efficient and accountable political and corporate governance structures, open societies and social conditions that distribute the benefits of globalisation. In turn, this means a solid state of rule of law and predictable public procedures in line with Western interests. All this flourishes best in an open society. During the twentieth century the struggle was between open societies and their totalitarian enemies; this century faces a struggle between global society and its enemies, who try to squash open societies and the evolution of a global society.

It is not easy to develop constitutional politics and procedures that are more or less in line with Western notions of an open society and democracy-based rule of law. The West views democracy as conducive to stable global development, but it has happily cooperated with many countries and societies that do not stand the test of democracy. Although transformation in the Greater Middle East may mean regime change, there is no certainty that this will lead inevitably to more democracy. The opposite could happen. This is because the West is unable to predetermine and manage the process of transformation in everywhere in the region at each stage of development. Democracy and the rule of law depend on locally rooted and created conditions, which have their own locally determined incubation period.

The West should therefore focus more on a specific model of statehood rather than on the details of democratic governance. The Western model of a secular, pluralistic state that protects human rights, which first and foremost includes the right of religious freedom requires the rule of law, predictability and transparency. As far as control and sharing power, accountability and the efficient management of public resources are concerned these are best served through the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy. Here, the West has many experiences to share with the countries of the Greater Middle East – although it also has a good number of domestic shortcomings to address.

There is nothing wrong with basing the transformation debate on the principles of democratic rule and the universality of human rights. However, these values cannot be imposed from the outside nor should they be imposed by force. This would be counterproductive, as the case of Iran shows. One decade after the end of the war, Bosnia-Herzegovina is still an extremely weak state that has not really benefited from the more than half a dozen free elections and its constitution. The conditions that burden Bosnia-Herzegovina must be dealt with in their own right. This is also true for any country in the Greater Middle East undergoing change. Democracy may be the final aim, but it may not be the means to success.

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<sup>16</sup> On the European threat perception since 9/11 see Harald Müller, "Terrorism, Proliferation: A European Threat Assessment", *Chaillot Papers* 58, March 2003, Institute for Security Studies, Paris.

This is not just a tactical question or a typical 'chicken and egg' problem. The issue must be addressed in light of global Western interests and time-horizons for action. The West shares three interests: a stable Greater Middle East that is a good economic and political partner, which cannot mean the absence of open and pluralistic societies; the end of the Greater Middle East as an exporter of instability, threat or terrorist violence, which means that its governments and regimes fight the root causes of terrorism and all possible expressions of violent movements out of self-interest; an open Greater Middle East, which means it must address the issue of successful integration into the globalising world.

Clearly, such goals are best achieved by democratic states that comply with the rule of law and support the idea of open and pluralistic societies. This Western vision is not matched by Western instruments or will. In order to prevail, stable democracies must grow over time and be domestically rooted. In the absence of traditions that are favourable to democratic rule, patience and a longer time-span must be factored in.

Regime change and transformation thus require the cooperation of the countries and societies in the Greater Middle East even after enforced regime change, as evident in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, positive results are only possible if the local population develops a sense of ownership of the new reality rather than just 'sitting on the fence', observing foreign intervention as a curse rather than a blessing. The majority of citizens must therefore be interested in regime change and transformation in order for such processes to gain enduring local legitimacy. This may be an uphill battle and a source of friction as it can produce local power struggles. It is therefore imperative for the West to develop a common Atlantic project that induces win-win-strategies for countries that undergo a fundamental transformation (such as Syria, Iran and definitely Saudi-Arabia). Although the reality on the ground will not be without tensions, the Western approach and attitude must at least be clear: the call for change must not be seen only as a Western interest, but as a mutual interest of the peoples of both hemispheres. If this is not the case, it will remain an artificial quest and an imposed process.

Asmus' and Pollack's initial proposal for a new transatlantic project based on the transformation of the Greater Middle East rightly notes that the West "needs a strategy that is more than a military campaign." Thus, it is necessary not only to fight terrorists and failed states, but "to change the dynamics that created such monstrous groups and regimes in the first place." They define 'transformation' as the need for "a new form of democracy in the Greater Middle East", and "a new economic system that could provide work, dignity, and livelihoods for the people of the regions" and thus help "Middle Eastern societies come to grips with modernity and create new civil societies that allow them to compete and integrate in the modern world without losing their sense of cultural uniqueness."<sup>17</sup> They offer no systematic outline of the implications of what they rightly describe as a "tall order." Developments in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein in May 2003 demonstrate the potential for problems and the danger of Western scepticism and even cynicism: post-conflict situations or post-dictatorial transformation never evolves according to a blueprint.

There is evidence everywhere of the different approaches of the US and the EU. The US debate tends to be strategic, security-biased and driven by universal norms. The European debate tends to be regional, multidimensional and institutional. Superficially, the issues are the same: weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, failed states, democracy, human rights, and energy supply. Differences of a moral and political nature become all too apparent once one goes into details. The Iraq crisis shows that it will not be easy to develop a common Western strategy based on overlapping interests and commonalities, including the optimal use of complementarity. And yet, a common project requires a strategy that focuses on common ground and complementarity; if this does not happen, the frustrating internal Western Cold War will continue. The obvious differences between the US and many EU positions might engender new quarrels over the ability of either side to set the agenda, launch initiatives and gain diplomatic ground.

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<sup>17</sup> Ronald D. Asmus and Kenneth M. Pollack, *ibid*, p. 4.

A US-led strategy for the region could well focus on military solutions and short-term effects.<sup>18</sup> The EU may well object as leading European opponents to US policy in Iraq have done since the 2002-2003 crisis. In fact, the US was forced to return to multilateralism when the stabilisation of Iraq came into play.<sup>19</sup> European opponents to regime change in Baghdad self-righteously tended to indicate that they were unsurprised with the obvious difficulties involved. And yet, they had to admit that it was the US led coalition that initiated change in the first place, whatever their plans to bring the US back the multilateral fold under the aegis of the UN. European partners could support the stabilisation of Iraq.

An EU-led strategy for the Greater Middle East will be based intuitively on the Barcelona Process experience, Europe's Middle East policy, the consistent reservation against the dual containment policy against Iraq and Iran, the insistence on a constructive dialogue with Iran, the cooperative arrangements with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the EU focus on economic cooperation, which obscures the fact that the EU is more dependent upon Middle East oil than the US. The US will not object to most of this – with the exception of EU policy towards Iran – but it will insist that it and not the EU should be the key mediator in the Middle East, despite the arrangements of the Quartet Powers<sup>20</sup>. The EU must recognise that many hopes attached to the Barcelona Process have been held hostage by the Middle East conflict notwithstanding the participation of Israel, all the Arab Middle East countries and the Palestinian Authority since the inception of the Barcelona Process in 1995.

A Western strategy driven by events in the Greater Middle East would be limited to *ad hoc* reactions to crises and therefore unable to contribute to transformation. It is in the interest of the US and the EU to approach the future of the Greater Middle East and Western policy in a comprehensive and pro-active way. Individual steps must be pragmatic and incremental, but they must be based on a comprehensive strategy to attain global goals. Otherwise they will time and again fall victim to 'events', what former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan called the defining element of politics.

A flexible approach is necessary for a comprehensive Atlantic strategy for system-opening, cooperative transformation and for the inclusion of the Greater Middle East in the process of globalisation. The overlapping nature of issues and the need for gradual progress in the most daunting fields must be recognised, and patience and strict schedules and mechanisms of conditionality to cover all participants are necessary. The US and the EU must decide whether they will approach the challenge with enabling or vetoing intentions. Both have legitimate and necessary (deterrence and cooperation) but the enterprise will be frustrated if the Atlantic partners quarrel and use veto capacities rather than working towards the same goals and offering system-opening support to the countries of the Greater Middle East that want to be partners in transformation. It is imperative for the West to combine a comprehensive strategy with a pragmatic sense of priorities, possible next steps and an appropriate mix of goals and instruments.

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<sup>18</sup> I am fully aware that this is a dishonest simplification of the US National Security Strategy, but it is the perception that prevails in Europe today. See: *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002.

<sup>19</sup> See also: Anthony H. Cordesman, "Victory in Iraq and the Not so New Middle East", *Discussion Paper at CSIS* Washington DC at [www.csis.org/features/iraq\\_notsonewme.pdf](http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_notsonewme.pdf). On US credibility see: Marina Ottaway, "Promoting Democracy in the Middle East. The Problem of Credibility", *Working Paper 35*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2003

<sup>20</sup> See Gisela Dachs, "Vier Verschworene plus zwei Streithähne. Das diplomatische Quartett: Amerikaner, Europäer, Russen und die UN schmieden gemeinsam Friedenspläne für Nahost", *Die Zeit*, 25 July 2002, p. 12.

## Chapter V

The next most urgent test cases of the ability of the US and the EU to develop a new transatlantic project are:

1. Rebuilding Iraq and returning sovereignty to the Iraqis through constitution-based secular statehood, the rule of law and democracy, emerging from a new development bargain among Western and Arab donor countries;
2. Establishing a constitutional and multi-ethnic state in Afghanistan that institutionalises peaceful and democratic solutions for cleavages in Afghan society;
3. Resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict and creating a two-state solution in line with the Quartet 'Road Map', and engendering long-term cooperation between the two states;
4. Bringing about peaceful regime change in Iran by supporting domestic reform that promotes an open society and the rule of law and full compliance with the internationally recognised non-proliferation mechanism for nuclear weapons;
5. Introducing a comprehensive CSCE-like (Helsinki-Process) mechanism for the whole region that includes the EU and the US as well as Russia,<sup>21</sup> possibly under UN mandate.

The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and regime change in both has set the immediate agenda regarding the Greater Middle East. They have established the bases for a lasting US military presence, brought back multilateralism and NATO, and have made the West clearly aware of the existence of the Greater Middle East and its status as the most crucial challenge Western countries as a whole. While crisis management will focus on unrest and the unpredictability of developments in countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia will remain crucial in light of potential global implications, the core issue is the overall development of the Greater Middle East.

From a global perspective, the successful system-opening and cooperative transformation of the Greater Middle East could stabilise the world order, lessen the danger of proliferation of terrorism that also threatens various countries in the region. It would facilitate the inclusion of the Greater Middle East in the global economic structures and thus critically support policies of inclusive development. In geo-political and geo-economic terms, the inclusion of a stable Greater Middle East that makes optimal use of its resources can contribute to a more stable, multipolar world order.

In regional and bi-regional terms, a successful system opening and cooperative transformation would enhance the potential for regional cooperation along the lines of the EU, NAFTA or the Council of Europe. It would leave room for sub-regional cooperation, as in the Maghreb and the Gulf, and for continuity in Barcelona Process mechanisms. It would increase the potential for enhanced trans-regional and bi-regional cooperation, although this leads to the question of the role to be played by the different Western partners: while the US might focus on strategic cooperation along the lines of Mediterranean policies of NATO, the EU might favour civil cooperation in line with the Barcelona Process model. Overlap and conflicts of interests could arise – over the relationship of the Gulf Cooperation Council with the Barcelona Process – for example.<sup>22</sup> This is all the more relevant for European policy makers as the Gulf Cooperation Council could cooperate to rebuild Iraq and even to foster change in Iran.

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<sup>21</sup> On Russia's internal dealings with Islam see Uwe Halbach, "Rußlands Welten des Islam", *SWP Studies* 15 April 2003, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin.

<sup>22</sup> See Bertelsmann Foundation, Center for Applied Policy Research (eds.), *The EU and the GCC. A New Partnership*. (Munich: Gütersloh 2002).

It is in the interest of the EU to broaden its horizon and develop strategies towards the Greater Middle East that focus on concentric circles and provide specific solutions to the range of existing problems. Some of the issues of what is a long and challenging agenda are supporting the development of human resources that are crucial for the rule of law and democracy in countries like Egypt, engaging Saudi-Arabia in a dialogue about a more open definition of Islam that takes into account a modern secular and pluralistic state, encouraging the reconciliation of Islamic interpretations of society with state that is secular, inclusive and pluralistic, supporting the economic diversification of the Gulf economies, and encouraging Israel and Palestine to search for ways to link positively their development.

What are 'concentric circles'? The term refers to an overlap between institutional and policy mechanisms that are strongest at the core and overlap as they extend to outer regions. The Atlantic partnership between the US and the EU is clearly at the heart of any such scheme. A second layer is the Barcelona Process, which is directed by the EU, and the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue in which the US is in the driving position. A third layer must connect the US and the EU more comprehensively with the Gulf, where both pursue bilateral (US) and bi-regional (EU) policies with different priorities and density. In the medium term, Iraq will be considered part of the Gulf region. A fourth layer must link the US and the EU with the other parts of the Greater Middle East – with Iran and Afghanistan as special cases – the republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia. It remains to be seen how Russia is or wishes to be linked to one or another or all the layers of the cooperative concentric circles. Turkey is involved on the sides through NATO membership and EU candidate member status.

In terms of policy, the different layers of concentric cooperation establish different priorities and vary in density. The Barcelona Process is a largely civil and socio-economic enterprise. The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue is strategic and security-oriented in nature. Reaching out to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries means defining a common agenda that includes specific bilateral and bi-regional cooperation (on trade, security, and energy) and links to overall regional development (a role in the implementation of peace in the Middle East, and the reconstruction and constitutionalization of Iraq and Afghanistan). Both hold likewise for the countries of the Caucasus and of Central Asia, albeit with a special economic cooperation arrangement. A stable Afghanistan can be considered a part of Central Asia. A transformed Iran could be considered a Gulf country, eventually establishing a link with the Gulf Cooperation Council. This is an anticipation that goes well beyond the current situation and serves only as a compass to outline the potential of a Helsinki-like process that encompasses the whole of the Greater Middle East.

As far as the Middle East peace process is concerned, a Helsinki-like Conference on Security, Cooperation and Partnership in the Greater Middle East could serve to guarantee the implementation of a final Middle East peace solution, whatever its final shape. Russia's participation in this global project is useful and a mandate of the United Nations for a new regional security and cooperation framework will be imperative as it was for the CSCE. A Conference on Security, Cooperation and Partnership in the Greater Middle East would eventually be able to make use of the US and the EU (and Russia and the Gulf countries) as guarantors and enablers. It would encourage the continuation of specific and dense regional schemes of cooperation such as the Barcelona Process, with the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, and specific forms of cooperation with Central Asia and the Caucasus. Further, a global regional process must enable, support and gradually incorporate and transform the very focused activities that are necessary while Afghanistan and Iraq require external support for stabilisation and reconstruction, and while the relationship between Israel and Palestine has not produced a viable two-state solution. Ultimately, these countries could become 'normal' participants of the overall process, overcoming their current status as centres of conflict or post-conflict crisis management.

This kind of ambitious scheme can only materialise and work on the basis of a pragmatic and gradual evolution that takes into account the different levels of cooperation that already exist or dominate mutual perceptions. It is unlikely that the Barcelona Process can be extended as a model to the Greater Middle East as it does not include the US. It is insufficient to extend the NATO

Mediterranean policy to the Greater Middle East, as it is too security-driven. The most difficult countries like Iraq and Afghanistan cannot set the priorities of a system-opening and cooperative transformation of the Greater Middle East. It is likewise important to encourage the constitutional development of the Gulf states, establish more frank and conditioned relations with Saudi Arabia, learn from the Algerian tragedy and prevent Tunisia and Egypt falling back more than their peaceful, open and stable development can afford.<sup>23</sup> It will be useful for the West to support Libya's return to the international community and its transformation into a relevant regional partner. It will be important to support the countries of the Greater Middle East with fundamental development problems, such as Yemen, Sudan, some of the Central Asian and Caucasus republics.

The two most crucial issues for the next two years are the peaceful transformation of Iran and a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict. The fate of a common long-term strategy will depend on the latter, whether the solution is bilateral or part of the Quartet that includes Russia and the United Nations. Failure to coordinate a peaceful transformation in Iran and to bring about a sustainable two-state solution will be more critical test cases for the renewal and reorientation of the Atlantic partnership than any others. Scepticism is in order regarding the implementation of the Road Map within the allotted time frame. This does not enhance, but rather undermines, Western credibility in the region. As far as Iran is concerned, the US must abstain from unilateral and military solutions, while Europe must increase pressure through conditionality to give sense and teeth to its constructive dialogue with the Islamic regime in Tehran.<sup>24</sup>

While old and newly emerging conflicts will dominate the daily agenda of policy-makers and the media, it is critical that there should prevail a long-term realisation of the idea of a common Atlantic project to develop a framework for a bi-regional mechanism with instruments comparable to those of the Helsinki Process that brought the Cold War to a peaceful end. Peace in the Middle East could trigger the beginning of a process that should reach beyond the Israeli-Palestine problem.<sup>25</sup> It would be worth exploring the launch of a CSCE-type conference to prepare the final stages of conflict-resolution between the two parties. The presence of all relevant regional and international actors would increase the legitimacy of a solution and pressure to induce it. Israel and Palestine should not be merely two neighbours living separately: if the vision of a transformed Greater Middle East is to become a reality, these former adversaries must at some stage find a mechanism similar to that which brought about confidence, cooperation and integration between France and Germany. Water and energy, which are both scarce and abundant, could play the role in the Middle East that coal and steel played for France and Germany in the 1950s.

Cooperation must be part of a wider bi-regional framework that includes the US (and possibly Russia) and is supervised and legitimated by the UN. A Helsinki Process approach must include criteria and mechanisms for various 'baskets', and provide for package-deal solutions that are mutually satisfactory. The most relevant 'baskets' of such a process should include the following issues: security, the fight against terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and the transformation

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that Western initiatives that apparently support positive change in the Arab world could easily produce negative results. The countries of Northern Africa, for instance, are enormously dependent upon import taxes on EU goods, although this practice runs counter to European commitments to free trade. During the 1990s import taxes on EU goods resulted in 19,2 per cent of all tax income for Algeria, 10,3 for Morocco, 15,9 in Tunisia, and 7,9 for Egypt. On the ambivalence of an early free trade zone between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners, see Jörg Wolf, "Staatszerfall: Die riskante Stabilisierungsstrategie der Europäischen Union für den südlichen Mittelmeerraum", in: Christopher Daase (ed.), *Internationale Risikopolitik: der Umgang mit neun Gefahren in den internationalen Beziehungen*, Baden-Baden 2002, p. 248

<sup>24</sup> See Johannes Reissner, "Europas „kritischer“ Dialog mit Iran", in: Klaus Schubert and Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet (eds.) *Die Europäische Union als Akteur der Weltpolitik*, Opladen 2000, pp. 173 ff.; Gawdat Bahgat, "The Future of US-Iran Relations", *Journal of South Asian and Middle East Studies* XXV(2) 2002, pp. 68 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Volker Perthes, "The Advantages of Complementarity: US and European Policies Towards the Middle East Peace Process", in: Volker Perthes (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East. Interests and Options*, Berlin 2002, p. 53 ff.; Jerrold D. Green, "La politique américaine et le conflit israélo-palestinien", *Politique étrangère* 3, 2002, pp. 617 ff.; Joseph N. Yackley, "Politikkoordination im Nahen Osten: Transatlantische Strategien zur Konfliktlösung?" *Internationale Politik* 57 (1), 2002, pp.45 ff.; Martin Ortega (ed.), "The European Union and the Crisis in the Middle East", *Chaillot Papers* 62, July 2003, Institute for Security Studies, Paris; Muriel Asseburg, "Die EU und der Friedensprozeß im Nahen Osten", *SWP Studie* S 28 July 2003, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin.



of military and militia forces into armies accountable to civil leaders; mutually beneficial economic and technological cooperation that addresses investor security, migration, and minimal social standards; greater free links between social and non-political actors, including media representatives, and a religious dialogue and search for the preservation and use of a common cultural heritage<sup>26</sup>; and sustainable human development, including training of human skills. The goal of this process should be the sustainable transformation of the Greater Middle East and of relations between it and the Atlantic partners for cooperation and common approaches to global challenges.

A burning question remains: who could launch this initiative? It is in the interest of the EU to do so. For the sake of a strong Union, both the European Parliament and the European Commission should take the initiative and seek the support of leading EU member states that can sustain the idea within the European Council. In June 2004, a new European Parliament will be elected; this will be followed by the nomination and approval of a new European Commission. Both elections come after the enlargement of the EU to ten new member states, and so both institutions will have added weight. Thus, the European Parliament and the European Commission should prepare a joint venture for the Winter of 2004-2005: a version of the Helsinki process for relations between the Greater Middle East, the EU, the United States and perhaps the Russian Federation, possibly under the auspices of the United Nations.

For Washington and Brussels alike, the Greater Middle East will be the centre of strategic, political and socio-economic as well as cultural and religious concern for many decades to come. It is important to consider the region as a whole. This means comprehensive approaches, not least within the foreign policy and academic communities, which tend to under use the potential for mutual interface. Sub-regional forms of cooperative development must be intensified without losing sight of the greater picture. Promising issues must be identified that can have an impact on cooperation inside the Greater Middle East, in a post-conflict Middle East or between the Greater Middle East and the West. The prevalence of a threat potential and the dangers stemming from the export of instability to the West must be addressed with cautious realism. A trans-regional or bi-regional framework should link the Atlantic partners with the countries and societies of the Greater Middle East.

Overall, the key to success is a clear focus: a transatlantic project must engage as many countries and societies in the Greater Middle East as possible, including Israel. This is the best recipe for sustainable success. This is a tall order for the EU and the US given that this is a region whose problems have divided the Atlantic partners in the past more than any other in the world. But the attempt must be made.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> On the difficulties this already presents for the established Euro-Mediterranean partnership see: Ulrike Julia Reinhardt, "Civil Society Co-operation in the EMP: From Declarations to Practice", *EuroMesCo Papers* 15, 2002, EuroMediterranean Study Commission, Lisbon. For the broader context of culture and politics in Mediterranean governance see: Indra de Soysa and Peter Zervakis (eds.), "Does Culture Matter? The Relevance of Culture in Politics and Governance in the Euro-Mediterranean Zone", *ZEI Discussion Paper C 112*, 2002, Center for European Integration Studies, Bonn.

<sup>27</sup> On the EU experience with the promotion of democracy in Northern Africa through the Barcelona Process see: Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs (eds.), *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: The Case of North Africa*, London 2002.

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