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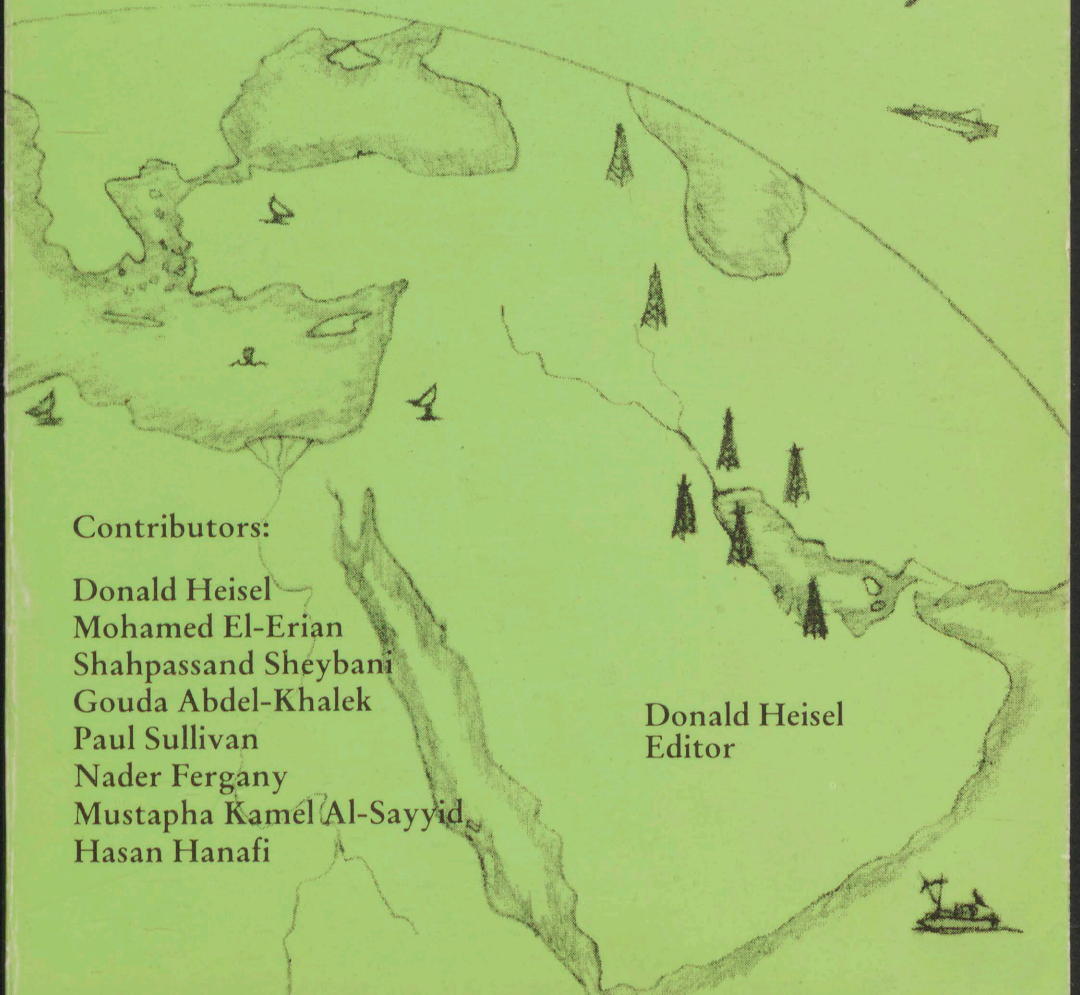
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The Middle East and Development in a Changing World



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THE NEW REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE ARAB WORLD

MUSTAPHA KAMEL AL-SAYYID

The initial title chosen for this chapter was most perplexing. It was, in the language of the organizers of this symposium, "Political Challenges to Region-Wide Development". The difficulty of tackling this topic does not lie only in the diverse nature of such challenges, which range from political instability and internal turmoil within some countries, to external pressures such as the conflicting designs of influential foreign powers. The difficulty relates more to the absence of an acceptable definition of the region itself. Is it the Middle East? Or the Arab World?

Whichever the definition adopted, one would not find it easy to come to an acceptable definition. Is Pakistan part of this Middle East, or even closer, is Sudan part of it? Is the Gulf area part of this Middle East? What about the former Soviet Central Asian republics? If one rejects this designation of the region, opting instead to the other term, one would still be wondering whom to include and whom to exclude from this area. Is the Arab world limited to countries members of the Arab League? Are the Comoros still part of the Arab world? What about Eritrea, which refused to join? Is it less Arab than Somalia whose population do not speak Arabic as well, but joined the Arab League nevertheless?

Since the subject of this chapter is the search for an explanation of the crisis of integration in the region, and since the most prominent integrationist movement was the Arab nationalist movement, then it would make more sense to define the relevant region in this context to be the Arab world, combining all the countries where the majority of citizens speaks Arabic. Countries whose Arabness is in doubt, but whose governments claim for them an Arab identity, would be considered the periphery of the Arab world.

At one level of analysis, it would seem that the problem of region-wide integration relates to the presence of various and even contradictory and antagonistic designs for its future. The "new architecture of the Middle East" is built on an assumption of the death or at least the irrelevance of its "old

architecture". Each type of architecture includes several models, which could be reduced to two for each type. Each model is advocated by one or more specific actors, who have distinct strategic interest. Each model can be identified primarily with actors outside of the region or inside it. However, a considerable convergence of interests between foreign and Arab actors is to be observed. One may initially assume that had there been only one model of integration, acceptable to all relevant actors, the region-wide integration might move smoothly. The presence of these multiple and even antagonistic schemes could therefore be considered a major challenge facing such integration.

It is useful to start off by examining very briefly these contradictory models, assessing the chances of success of each, and then proceeding to an analysis of how Political Science theories could illuminate understanding of prospects of realization of each of them. We conclude with some thoughts on the possible future of the region.

The Four Competing Projects

Observers of the Arab scene at present can easily identify four competing projects to shape the future of the region (Hitti, 1997, Ibrahim, 1997). The two originating in the region are the Arab nationalist and the Islamist projects, while the two advocated mostly by powers outside the region are the Middle Eastern "arrangement" supported by the US and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership proposed by the European Union. The following sections define the major features of each project, identify its partisans and assess its chances of determining future evolution of the Arab world.

The Arab Nationalist Project. Undoubtedly, the Arab nationalist project is somewhat older. It shares with the Islamist project a common historical precedent, in the Arabo-Islamist empire which brought nearly all countries of the region together, though for a very brief period, under both the Omayyad and Abbassid Caliphates. It was revived in the early decades of this century under the various secret societies established by members of an emerging Arab intelligentsia, made up of Ottoman army officers, civilian intellectuals and traditional chiefs. It was manifested in a most dramatic way in the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916. Leaders of

the revolt had secretly concluded a deal with British officials to undertake the revolt against the Turks in the Arab East, in return for British support of their ideal of establishing one Arab state in the Levant and parts of Arabia. They were "rewarded" by the secret agreement between French and British officials to partition the Levant amongst them and by the promise made by Lord Balfour to the president of the World Zionist Organization to offer Arab Palestine as a "national home" for the Jews (Hourani, 1991).

This initial setback for the Arab project as well as the defeat of Arab armies in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-1949 contributed to further radicalization of the Arab nationalist project in the 1950's and the 1960's. It acquired a clear anti-colonialist orientation, and moved from being a limited gathering of mostly Levantine intellectuals to a truly pan-Arab mass movement inspired by actions and thoughts of the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

The Arab nationalist project reached a climax twice since then, once in the late 1950's and early 1960's under the leadership of Nasser, and a second time through the collective effort of Arab countries in the early 1970's. The dream of Arab unity was partially realized the first time when both Egypt and Syria merged under one state between February 1958 and September 1961, with Yemen joining them in a confederation. Iraq and Jordan followed suit with the establishment of a confederation of those two countries. Other attempts were made later to forge either a federal entity among Arab republics centering around Egypt with Syria and Iraq in 1963, or in a confederation, with Libya and Sudan in 1969, and Libya and Syria in 1971. These and other Arab political unity schemes failed miserably, ending mostly with heightened hostility among their former partners in what came partly to be known as "the Arab cold war" according to the term which was coined by the late Malcolm Kerr (1971).

The second moment of a climax for the Arab nationalist project was reached in October 1973 when the armies of both Egypt and Syria jointly launched the October War to liberate their territories occupied by Israel during the June War of 1967. Manifestations of solidarity with the Egyptians and Syrians were not limited to popular masses, but Arab governments took a unified position in support of this "Liberation war", although the Libyan President Mo'ammar Al-Gaddafi called the whole thing "a farce". Arab governments expressed concretely this solidarity when

members of the OAPEC, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, decided to reduce their petroleum production by 5 per cent every month, and to penalize countries viewed as backing the Israeli position by withholding Arab petroleum exports to them until they changed their position. The states targeted by this measure included the US, the Netherlands, Denmark and Japan. The measures were lifted in early 1974 on the demand of both the Egyptians and the Saudis, following the conclusion of disengagement agreements along the Egyptian and the Syrian fronts (Ibrahim, 1985).

Since then, the Arab cause has met only setbacks. The first came in November 1977 when the Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat decided to go to Jerusalem to bid for a reconciliation between Arabs and Israelis. When an Egyptian Israeli agreement was concluded in Camp David a year later, Arab governments decided to punish the Egyptian government by breaking diplomatic relations with it, suspending Egypt's membership in the Arab League and transferring the headquarters of the League from Cairo to Tunis. Thus, the Arab world was divided on its most sacred issue, that of Palestine, with the country which had claimed the position of leadership recognizing the state of Israel within its pre-June 1967 boundaries covering more than half of the territory of historical Palestine and committing itself formally to engage in full "normal" relations with it (Ajami, 1981). Less than a decade later, several Arab governments revoked their decisions to punish Egypt, reestablished diplomatic ties with its government, agreed to move the Arab League back to its Cairo headquarters, and even elected an Egyptian to serve twice as its Secretary General.

This reversal of the Arab position towards Egypt was an implicit admission of the legitimacy of Egypt's approach towards Israel. That development became abundantly clear few years later when both the PLO and Jordan concluded agreements with Israel, in 1993 and 1994. The strength of the movement toward accommodation was underscored by the fact that the first of the agreements, known as Oslo Accords, stopped short of recognizing Palestinian statehood, a measure that continues to be vehemently rejected by the Netanyahu government in office in Israel since May 1996.

The second major setback came in August 1990 when Iraqi troops occupied and annexed Kuwait. The event provoked differing reactions in the

Arab world. It also offered the US a convenient pretext to lead an international expedition to get Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, to dismantle the Iraqi military machine, and even to practically partition Iraq into three zones, only one of which is under the complete control of the Iraqi government. Once again the Arab world was divided on a major issue, but the division this time was far more profound and lasting than on the occasion of Egypt's separate peace with Israel. Condemnation of the Camp David Accords and the Washington-signed "Peace Treaty" was almost unanimous in the Arab world, at both governmental and popular levels. On the other hand, the line of division in the case of the Iraqi invasion ran almost through the middle, particularly when the US declared its intention to send troops to Saudi Arabia for a military operation against Iraq. What was particularly disturbing about this division, from an Arab nationalist point of view, was the fact that some Arab countries accepted to join a military alliance led by the USA, who is the major power backing Israel, against another Arab state. Sympathy with the Iraqi people was widespread in the Arab world, even in the countries that joined the US military alliance. That sympathy became particularly strong when the US started the military operation known as "Desert Storm", went beyond the limited goal of getting Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, to systematically destroy Iraq's technological and military capability, according to a UN report. (Zunes, 1997). At the same time, popular support for Iraq among Palestinians, in Jordan, Yemen and in the Maghreb was bitterly resented in the Gulf, where such support was viewed as lack of sympathy with the Kuwaiti and other Gulf peoples .

It is true that the Arab nationalism had long been considered dead by some commentators on the Middle East scene (Ajami, 1981). Splits in Arab ranks at both the official and popular levels confirmed for those observers the definite end of Arabism. However, such hasty judgment does not accord well with realities. Even at the moments of crisis, intense reactions to the crisis demonstrated depth of common interests uniting the Arabs. The fate of both Kuwait and Iraq did not leave Arab public opinion indifferent. Protests against US military preparations against Iraq were strongest in the Maghreb countries, which had been perceived before the Second Gulf Crisis to be the most westernized of all Arab countries. The largest demonstrations against the US-led military campaign against Iraq took place in cities of Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. These

were vivid signs that Arabism was well and alive in these parts of the Arab world. A few years later, another sign, the convening of the Arab Summit in Cairo in July 1996, suggested again that the Palestinian issue, the fate of Arab lands occupied or controlled by Israel in the Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon, and the annexationist policies of the Israeli government, are all matters of common concern to both Arab governments and public opinion. Arab heads of state promptly accepted the invitation of President Mubarak to come to Cairo to discuss these matters and to take a common position. It is true that the gathering did not change much in the Middle East. But the fact that the feuds of the Second Gulf war did not dissuade Arab governments from getting together to discuss these issues suggests that they still perceive a common threat to their security coming from Israel, and that they know how to put secondary differences aside when the common Arab destiny is at stake.

Since then, there have been renewed calls for activating the Arab League, consolidating economic integration among Arab countries and maintaining the common stand against Israel. However, the setbacks experienced since June 1967 have left their marks on recent formulations of the Arab nationalist project.

Thus, the immediate merger of existing Arab political entities in the Arab world is far less common now than in the 1950's and the 1960's. Nor is there much enthusiasm for the elimination of national boundaries, such as President Mo'ammar Al-Gaddafi did with Egypt and Tunisia in the 1970's. The least ambitious goal of Arab nationalists at present is to make the Arab League a more effective regional grouping, endowed with the capacity to peacefully settle disputes among its members, perhaps through an Arab court of justice, and to establish a regional system for promotion of human rights. The more ambitious Arab nationalists call for the activation of existing agreements for region-wide economic integration. Both the Egyptian and the Syrian governments backed the idea, which was recently endorsed by a decision of the Ministerial Council of the Arab League (Hitti, 1997). Several public figures in many Arab countries, including editors-in-chief of newspapers, former prime ministers and leading

academics wrote newspaper articles to persuade the Arab public as well as Arab governments of the soundness of this scheme.¹

For the Arab nationalist movement to be able to shape the evolution of the region, it will have to overcome formidable difficulties, some of which are due to opposition by non-Arab regional and international actors, and others are related to the necessity of rethinking the Arab nationalist project itself. The United States and Israel are strongly hostile to any reactivation of a regional grouping excluding Israel. A meeting between Presidents Al-Assad of Syria, Mubarak of Egypt and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia in Alexandria in 1994 to discuss the Arab situation led the US to assemble a meeting in Cairo few weeks later bringing together heads of state of Egypt and Jordan, together with the Chairman of the PLO and the late Israeli prime minister to show that there was another grouping in the Middle East. At the same time, Arab nationalists will have to accept the legitimacy and inviolability of territorial boundaries in the Arab world. They will have to reformulate their nationalist project in more realistic terms, perhaps adopting a functionalist approach to Arab political integration, drawing on the spillover effects of regional economic integration. They will also have to bring themselves to recognize the state of Israel within its pre-June 1967 borders as a basis for a lasting settlement of its disputes with Arab countries. It should be recalled that Arab nationalists who meet annually in the Pan-Arab National Congress vehemently reject all peace treaties concluded between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the PLO considering them a "surrender to the Zionist enemy" and "sacrifice of Arab and Palestinian basic legitimate rights". None of these challenges is easy to overcome.

¹ See several articles in *Al-Ahram*, particularly those of the editor-in-chief Ibrahim Naf'e in the weekly issues of Friday throughout the winter and spring of 1997.

The Islamist Project. Like the Arab nationalist project, the Islamist project predates the independence and in some cases even the existence of the modern state system in the Arab world. It was advocated in the late 19th and early 20th century by Arab and Moslem intellectuals, combining the traditional Sheiks such as Al-Afghani and Abdou with modern intellectuals as Mustapha Kamel and Mohammed Faired. Like Arab nationalism, it had conservative versions that appealed to Western powers that dominated the region. It is known that Great Britain supported the establishment of the Arab League. The US government toyed in the 1960's with the idea of an Islamic pact to constitute a shield against the expansion of Socialist and Communist ideas, viewed by the US to be popular in the Arab world in those years. Like the Arab project, there are different versions of the Islamist project, some calling for the overthrow of existing regimes in Arab and Muslim countries, others accepting the present state system in the region and trying to build on it.

At present, one can distinguish two versions of the Islamist project. A radical militant version puts the overthrow of existing regimes in Muslim countries as a top priority, calling for their replacement by an Islamic Caliphate that would unite the Islamic "Umma" under one rule. This version is associated with groups engaged in armed struggle to bring about the fall of their own governments. The Jihad organization in Egypt and the Armed Islamist Group in Algeria are the best known partisans of this vision. The other version calls for reform of existing Muslim societies along Islamist lines. It seeks to engage in peaceful political action to win recognition as legal political parties. They believe that Arab and Muslim governments can be persuaded to adopt what they would view as more independent foreign policies, particularly towards the USA and Israel. They seek to enhance cooperation between Arab and Muslim governments. This second vision is advocated by the Muslim Brothers and the Socialist labor Party in Egypt, by Jordanian Islamists, and by the Rafah Party in Turkey. (Ibrahim, 1992) Advocates of the second position do not talk much about an Islamic Caliphate, although they have not explicitly rejected the Caliphate as a long-term goal.

Interestingly enough, the second version would be acceptable in part to all governments in Muslim countries, including those ruled by parties that are secularist in principle. All these countries are members of the Islamic

Conference Organization; their ministers of foreign affairs meet at least once a year. In order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of their publics, and to reaffirm their Islamist credentials, these governments are willing to take a few steps toward enhancing their own solidarity, or at least to pay lip service to the Islamist cause, quite popular among their citizens. The Rafah government in Turkey proposed to establish an Islamic Group of Eight, to improve trade amongst themselves and perhaps to eventually create a free trade area. The proposal was strongly supported by the Iranian government and was welcome by the government of Egypt, which agreed to take part in a conference of heads of state of these countries in Istanbul in mid-June 1997. The Prime Minister, Dr. Kamal El-Ganzouri, represented Egypt. At that summit, the establishment of the Group of Eight Developing Countries was formally announced, and a set of proposals agreed upon to enhance economic cooperation among the eight countries (Al-Ahram, June 16, 1997).

Even if it is assumed that the eight leading Muslim governments are equally committed to the enhancement of their economic cooperation, it would take them a long time to translate this wish into concrete reality. The most ambitious goal of the group is to create a free trade area. As with similar ideas within the Arab world, a decision to establish such an area would not in itself be enough to increase the volume of trade among them. They either have competitive economies or limited complementarities which, in the absence of compensatory action, would work in favor of the relatively most advanced amongst them. The group includes three newly industrialized countries, Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey; they might well gain more from this liberalization of trade than their less advanced partners. However, it is doubtful that they all share the same degree of enthusiasm for this cooperative scheme. Two of the members in the Group of Eight, Iran and Egypt, do not have full diplomatic relations. The stability of one of the two governments that initiated this development, the Erbakan administration in Turkey, is far from certain. In fact, Prime Minister Erbakan had explicitly declared his intention of handing over the premiership one year earlier to his coalition partner, Mrs. Tansu Chiller. The step was in preparation for an anticipated general election, with the decision to be effective the day after the end of the Summit. Prime Minister Erbakan was forced to undertake this move under pressure from the National Security

Council in Turkey, which is dominated by the secularist generals of the armed forces, as well as from the judiciary who are about to rule over the claim that the presence of his Rafah Party is incompatible with the Turkish constitution. For its part, the Egyptian government was unwilling to be associated very closely with an Islamist initiative coming from the ruling Islamist party in Turkey and from the Islamist Republic of Iran, lest the US would be displeased with such a "suspicious" association. Egypt seemed to be moving very slowly in accepting the invitation to become a member or to attend the pre-Summit meeting. The fact that member states are not all geographically contiguous would add to the difficulties of implementing cooperative projects. Two of the member countries are in Africa, Nigeria and Egypt. Only two of them, Turkey and Iran, have common borders. The other four are in two different regions, Bangladesh and Pakistan in South Asia, and Indonesia and Malaysia in South East Asia. Of all Arab countries, Egypt is the only member. (It is surprising that Saudi Arabia, with its command of important financial resources, was not invited to the Summit.)

For all these reasons, and given the fact that the most ardent supporters of this project within the Arab countries are to be found in the ranks of the partly tolerated, partly untolerated Islamist opposition, it is highly unlikely that the Islamist project will shape evolution of the Arab world in the near future.

The Euro-Med Partnership. The other two projects emanate principally from outside the Arab world, though they definitely have supporters in the region. The Euro-Med project is advocated by the European Union while the USA pushes very hard the idea of a Middle Eastern arrangement.

As for the first of these two schemes, its Arab and European partisans among intellectuals are fond of pointing out the old historical, and cultural ties between the two sides of the Mediterranean, its North and its South (Mostafa, 1997). This is of course correct. The present scheme, however, is more a response to the strategic and economic interests of Europe, with its concern about consequences of political instability along its Southern flank, particularly in the Maghreb countries. A leading specific concern is potential increased migration to countries of the EU.

But the Euro-Med partnership, just as much as the proposed Middle East Arrangement, is a typical case of North-South relations. All the essential features of a presumably cooperative scheme are determined by the North, reflecting its perception of its own interest, but with very little regard for interests of the Southern partners, who have little power to influence their final shape.

The European Community had a Mediterranean policy as far back as 1972, initially probably pushed by France, with its five former colonies along the Southern and Eastern coasts (six if Mauritania is included), in addition to its close ties to Egypt. Italy and later Spain had similar concerns. Global competition with the USA and Japan, who each have their own economic backyard, in NAFTA and Latin America for the former and in East Asia for the latter, pushed the European Community to streamline relations with its perceived adjacent backyard in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, Eastern Europe, viewed as a German sphere of influence, is consolidating its ties to the European Community. Thus, the diplomatic importance of ties to these Mediterranean countries became a crucial French asset, and to a lesser extent for Italy, as a counterweight to Germany's growing influence in Europe. This wish to promote Euro-Mediterranean ties met with much enthusiasm on the part of some Arab countries, including not only the five Maghreb countries, but Egypt and Syria as well. The proposed European connection was seen as a way of lessening dependence on the USA in both economic and strategic matters. (Wilson, 1994, Salamé, 1994).

The European Mediterranean policy went through three basic stages. An overall Mediterranean approach was adopted by the Community Heads of State and Governments in Paris in 1972 who called for strengthening of cooperation with non-member Mediterranean countries. This beginning led to the conclusion a series of agreements of various types, but those concluded with Arab countries, i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Jordan, were of a single pattern. They embraced financial and technical cooperation, institutional provisions setting up bodies for consultation and the exchange of information and trade cooperation. In addition, agreements with Maghreb countries contained specific provisions on social aspects of cooperation (European Community, 1991). The second stage began in 1989 when the EC, aware of dangers for its own security of instability in the

Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, and willing to support the process of economic and political liberalization undertaken by some of these countries, defined a more comprehensive approach towards the Mediterranean partners. The Community's Council adopted a framework for redirecting its policy. This Mediterranean policy included six major components:

- back-up for the process of economic adjustment;
- encouragement of private investment;
- increase in bilateral and community assistance;
- maintenance or improvement of arrangements governing access to the community market;
- close involvement with the progress of the Community towards the single market;
- strengthening of economic and political dialogue, at the regional level where possible.

This Mediterranean policy found expression in the financial protocols signed between the Community and non-member Mediterranean countries. The Community allocated for the implementation of this policy an overall aid package of ECU 4405 million, which would be spent as follows:

- i-ECU 2075 million for the financial protocols (with Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon) that would run from November 1991 to 31 October 1996;
- ii-2030 million for more broadly based financial cooperation outside the protocols (including regional cooperation and cooperation on the environment);
- iii-ECU 300 million to provide back-up for economic reform. (EC, 1991, 6).

Six years following the adoption of this more comprehensive policy, the European Union decided to embark upon a more ambitious collective scheme, bringing all its Mediterranean partners within one framework. It was built on the work carried out by the Community in previous years marked by the adoption on 27-28 November 1995 of the Barcelona Declaration. The Declaration was signed by 27 states—the fifteen members of the European Union plus twelve non-members of the Mediterranean region. The countries initially included Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Turkey, Malta and

Cyprus. The Declaration provided for cooperation in three areas: political and security; Economic and financial; social, cultural and human affairs.

In this way, European-Mediterranean relations took a qualitative leap forward. The new arrangement moved from the narrow emphasis on economic and financial matters to cover as well political, security, and humanitarian aspects of their relationships. The political and security chapter in fact took precedence over the chapter on economic cooperation.

The parties to the Barcelona Declaration made concrete commitments to give shape to their multi-dimensional cooperation. On political and security matters, they undertook to "conduct strengthened political dialogue at regular intervals". In the economic and financial chapter, they agreed to move towards the establishment of a free trade area by the year 2010. They also agreed to strengthen their economic cooperation and concerted actions, and to promote financial cooperation. The European Union, set aside ECU 4685 million in the form of financial assistance over the period 1995-1999, in addition to any loans from the European Investment Bank and bilateral financial assistance from member states. Finally, under the humanitarian chapter, the parties agreed to cooperate in developing human resources, promoting understanding between cultures and exchange between civil societies.

In order to ensure follow-up of this Declaration, member states agreed to that their ministers of foreign affairs would meet regularly in order to monitor the application of the Declaration and to formulate actions, to achieve the objectives of the partnership. In addition there are to be thematic meetings of ministers, senior officials and experts, and more contacts between parliamentarians, regional authorities, local authorities and social partners. Finally, meetings of the foreign ministers are to be prepared by a "Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona Declaration" composed of senior officials of the European Union and one partner from each of the Mediterranean partners. The first meeting of foreign ministers of the Barcelona Declaration took place in Malta in April 1997.

The Barcelona Declaration has become already, in less than two years after its adoption, an ongoing reality in the Mediterranean, with meetings of experts, senior officials of the government as well as ministers of relevant ministries taking place regularly. Interest in a strong Euro-Mediterranean "partnership" is fully shared on both sides of the Mediterranean. Some

countries have more stake in it than others, but it has not met with opposition in principle from any of them. Interest in this partnership is due undoubtedly to the intensity and variety of exchanges among the partners. A publication of the EC put the Community's imports from the Mediterranean countries in the early 1990's at US\$ 25 billion, whereas exports of the Community reached over US\$ 30 billion. The Mediterranean countries ranked ahead of Japan among the Community's trading partners. The Community is a more important trading partner for the Mediterranean countries, as they rely on the EU for the biggest share of their foreign trade, ranging between 50-75 per cent for some of them. (EC, 1991). Another study based on the EU figures found Mediterranean countries to account for a bigger share of both imports and exports of the EC than countries of Eastern Europe with the exception of Russia. Figures were available for 1990 and 1993. The same study found the range of trade dependence of Mediterranean countries to be between 40 per cent (Syria) and 72-75 per cent (Tunisia and Malta respectively) for imports, and between 16 per cent (Lebanon) and 80 per cent (Tunisia) for exports. Other Arab countries typically relied on the EC for more than half of their exports. This was the case for Egypt and Syria (55 per cent), and for Algeria and Morocco (68-69 per cent). (Al-Sharqawi, 1996) The human dimension of these links is also very important, with immigrants from Mediterranean countries in the EC estimated to be no less than 5 million in the early 1990's. (EC, 1991)

Arab countries are also interested not only in getting better terms for their economic exchanges with Europe, but would like Europe to play a more active role in political issues of concern to the Arab world such as the Palestinian question and sanctions against Iraq. Countries of Continental Europe tend to take a more balanced stand on these issues than the US, particularly under the Clinton Administration, whose positions are often difficult to distinguish from those of Israel.

For these reasons, the "partnership" is going to continue and to shape evolution in the region in future. However, it will continue under the terms dictated by the powerful "partner". Thus, the EU will determine who is to join the partnership, including some countries that have no coast on the Mediterranean, as Jordan, and excluding others that are very Mediterranean, as Libya. In addition, the European partners show no respect for the identity of Arab countries. The EU simply put them with non-Arab countries as

Israel, Malta, Cyprus and Turkey. The *Mediterranean* "partnership" would therefore compete with the *Arab* identity for the loyalty and allegiance of Arab peoples who belong to it.

Strengthening relations with Europe might pay off politically for the Arabs, with Europe adopting more sympathetic stands on Arab issues. However, this is far from certain in the light of what happened in the Malta meeting, which was preceded by the commitment of the Dutch Presidency of the EC not to allow the meeting to take any decision condemning Israel as a condition for participation.

Moreover, economic gains for the Arabs are not a foregone conclusion. Both economic theory and the experience of the Maghreb countries and Turkey, who have a longer history of close association with the Community, demonstrate that economic integration among countries at different levels of development works in the short and medium term against the interests of less advanced countries, unless specific, effective measures are taken to enable the latter to adapt to the heightened competition. The amount of economic assistance promised by the EU to help the twelve Mediterranean countries prepare for the transition to a free trade area by the year 2010, less than one billion ECU per year for all twelve, was judged by some to be too modest for the magnitude of the challenge. (Awad et al, 1996)

The Middle East Arrangement. The Middle East arrangement is the most recent of these four projects. It took its present shape gradually after the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. The idea of a Middle East organization goes back to the early 1950's, when it was proposed by the American government but was rejected by successive Egyptian governments before and after the July Revolution of 1952. The older version of this notion was limited to security and military cooperation in the face of so-called "Communist threat", but would have been composed essentially of Arab and Muslim states. This idea took concrete shape only once when Great Britain succeeded in getting Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan to form a military alliance known as the Baghdad Pact, established in 1955 but withered away when Iraq withdrew from it following the July 14, 1958 Revolution. Its name changed to the CENTO, but it was left gradually to die. (Heykal, 1986)

The recent formulation of this idea grew from the US proposal in the Madrid Peace Conference to search for a definite settlement of the Middle East conflict along two tracks. The first track would be bilateral negotiations between Israel and concerned Arab parties, the Palestinians, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The second would be multilateral talks on cooperation over a wide range of issues among these parties as well as other countries, Arab, Middle Eastern and others who might be interested in such issues. It was decided in late 1991 to establish five committees as forums for the talks, and a steering committee to supervise the whole exercise. The five committees were on Economic Cooperation presided over by the European Community, an Environmental Committee chaired by Japan, a Refugees Committee chaired by Canada, Water Sharing chaired by USA and an Arms Control Committee chaired by Russia. The five committees started their meetings in April and May 1992. They held several rounds of negotiations until early 1996. These multilateral talks aroused a great deal of interest within the international community, reflected in the number of states that participated. The number of participating states went up to more than thirty in most of the committees, with those participating in the working groups reaching over forty in some cases, as in the meeting of the working group on water resources which met in Oman April 17-19, 1993. A large number of Arab countries other than those involved in the bilateral talks with Israel also participated, including the five countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Tunisia, Mauritania and Morocco besides Egypt. Several meetings of these committees or their working groups took place in Arab countries, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Tunisia and Egypt. (Peters, 1996)

These multilateral talks dragged on with no concrete results. The US then decided to create another forum for pushing normalization of economic relations between Israel and Arab countries, before outstanding political and security issues are decided, and with little involvement of the European Union which chaired the Committee of Economic Cooperation in the multilateral talks. The mechanism proposed was a series of economic conferences on regional economic cooperation, bringing together businessmen as well as government officials of the concerned countries. The first of these meetings took place in Casablanca (October-November 1994), the second in Amman (October 1995) and the third in Cairo (November

1996). A fourth economic conference is scheduled to meet in Qatar (November 1997).

The major goal of these forums is to establish a Middle Eastern multi-layered security regime. It would be composed of a smaller circle of former belligerent states in the Middle East proper, who would be tied together by a series of peace agreements. They would be surrounded by a larger circle of Arab and Middle Eastern states who accept all full normalization of relations with Israel, and further supported by the dominant powers in the international system, primarily the USA, Japan, the European Union, and Russia. One of the advocates of this regime was the former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who went as far as suggesting the establishment of a Middle Eastern Market in the region. (Peres, 1994)

There are no concrete proposals on how the non-economic dimensions of this Middle East arrangement would be structured. There are however, more specific ideas of how the economy of the region would evolve. The Middle East and North Africa Economic Cooperation Conferences, which grouped together business people, government officials and other public figures from Israel, Arab countries and other powers interested in economic developments in the region elaborated some broad ideas on the architecture of the economy of the region. These ideas were spelled out in the first of such meetings held in Casablanca in October-November 1994.

The Casablanca Declaration called for:

- 1-a Middle East and North Africa Economic Community which involves, at a determined stage, the free flow of goods, capital and labor throughout the region;
- 2-a funding mechanism, including the creation of a Middle East and North Africa Development Bank. The funding mechanism would include appropriate bodies to promote dialogue on economic reform, regional cooperation, technical assistance and long term development planning;
- 3-a regional tourist board to facilitate tourism and promote the Middle East and North Africa as a unique and attractive tourist location;
- 4-a private sector Regional Chamber of Commerce and Business Council to facilitate intra-regional trade relations. (Peters, 1996)

The Economic Community of the Middle East and North Africa is still a far-fetched idea, given the lack of progress in the settlement of outstanding security and political issues between Israel and other Arab parties, particularly the Palestinians, the Syrians and the Lebanese. At the same

time, most of the other proposals made in Casablanca are on the way of becoming a reality. In fact, it was agreed in Amman, a year later, to establish the MENA Bank, the regional tourist board and the regional chamber of commerce.

The proposal that is most advanced in its implementation is undoubtedly the so-called MENA Bank. Formally, this idea came out of a joint proposal made in 1994 by Israel and the concerned Arab parties, Egypt, PLO, and Jordan. This bank should strive to promote both Arab-Israeli peace as well as development of the private sector. Its mandate is to:

promote private sector growth and entrepreneurship; support regional development projects, particularly transborder infrastructure; and enhance regional economic policy dialogue and coordination through a regional forum. (MENA Bank, 1997)

The Bank will have US\$ 5 billion total capital, \$1.25 billion of which will be paid-in. The capital would be was to have been provided by the European Community, Japan, US, Gulf countries and others. However, both the European Union and most Gulf countries have not joined the Bank as of the summer of 1997. It was decided in the Amman Economic Conference on Economic Cooperation in the Middle East that the Bank would be headquartered in Cairo. A transitional team, charged with the establishment of the bank, headed by an American ambassador started already working in Cairo in the spring of 1997.

How much of this regional engineering scheme is likely to be realized? At present, it seems doubtful that this scheme can be fully implemented. This is so despite much arm-twisting by the USA to continue holding meetings of businessmen and government leaders. One example of such methods was seen in the summer of 1996, when the Egyptian President suggested postponing the Cairo meeting, scheduled for November 1996, until some concrete steps were taken by the Netanyahu government in Israel to show its commitment to the implementation of agreements reached with the Palestinians. Pressure exercised by the US government led the Egyptian government to hold the conference on the scheduled date with no concessions whatsoever coming from the Israeli side.

It is difficult to see how such a community can see the light of the day if there is no real peace in the region. Some important actors on the Middle

East scene have boycotted any forum discussing regional cooperation prior to Israeli withdrawal of occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon. These parties include Syria, Lebanon and Iran, which remains opposed to the whole process of negotiated settlement. There is fierce opposition to the proposed Middle Eastern market by many Arab intellectuals (Al-Gebali, 1995), and it is not certain that key Arab governments, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia would be willing to go along with this proposal if no fair settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute is reached. The stalled multilateral talks since the Spring of 1996 are one indicator of the difficulty of pursuing cooperation in the absence of an adequate settlement of outstanding political and security issues. In fact, pressures by the US government on the Arabs to enter into cooperative relations with Israel before a just and permanent settlement is reached have pushed the Syrians, supported by the Egyptians and the Saudis, to invoke the necessity to revive the old scheme of an Arab common market in the Spring of 1997. (Al-Ahram, June 16, 1997)

Which Model Has More Chances of Success?

The analysis in preceding sections of the four models of regional architecture has identified the forces associated with each of them. It made evident the contrast between two categories. The first two schemes, the Arabist and the Islamist, are supported by political movements and by states within the region. Some versions of the Arabist scheme meet with the approval of states such as Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia and are verbally endorsed by all other Arab states. This is the case of the Arab common market, or some scheme of enhanced economic cooperation among Arab countries. More radical versions of this model were advocated by Libya and Iraq in the past, but find little echo in other Arab countries. Interestingly enough, while any version of this model is opposed by the USA, the European Union would not necessarily object to a scheme of regional economic integration, so long as this scheme leaves open the possibility of cooperation with Europe. Finally, while the Islamists were generally hostile to the nationalist idea, they could view some degree of Arab unity as one step along the path to the unity of the Islamic Umma.

The Islamist model is also advocated by movements and states within the region. Unlike the Arab nationalist scheme, which could fit very well with the present status quo in the Arab world, and does not call openly in its economic versions for the overthrow of any Arab government, most versions of the Islamist scheme are seen as opposed to the present status quo. They could ill-accommodate the regimes viewed by its advocates as "secularist", as those of Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Algeria. Only the most diluted versions of the Islamist project, those limited to increased contacts among Muslim countries to coordinate some of their foreign policy stands, would be generally acceptable to all countries of the region. The more radical versions of this project are associated with opposition Islamist groups, who are tolerated in some Arab countries as Jordan and Yemen, but are severely suppressed in others, as Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia. Except in a few states, most notably Iran and Sudan, they appear to be losing support. Any version of Islamism that goes beyond simple coordination of some foreign policies and a limited measure of economic cooperation is likely to be resisted most firmly, not only by the USA and Israel, and coolly received in Europe, but also by most states in the region, including the conservative regimes in the Gulf.

However, these two schemes stand as voices of resistance and defense of authentic identities in the region against the other schemes which seek to impose new identities on the region that are at variance with its long and distinctive history and its shared culture.

The other two models are pushed by external actors, backed by the superior economic resources of these actors as well as by the influence they exert thanks to their military capabilities and diplomatic weight. The European Union stands behind one of these models and the US supports the other. Some regional actors are attracted to each of these models, the Maghreb countries are quite keen to see the Barcelona process go ahead, while Israel and to a lesser extent Turkey would benefit largely from the establishment of the Economic Community of the Middle East and North Africa. It would seem that the Barcelona process is in a better position than the Middle Eastern Economic Community. Supporters of the former are Arab countries, and it has generated little resistance in the Arab world except among nationalist intellectuals, whereas the latter finds support mainly

among non-Arab regional actors and has generated considerable resistance in the Arab world at both official and popular levels.

How would the chances of success of these schemes be assessed in terms of Political Science theories of regional integration? In fact, two theoretical perspectives are useful to analyze prospects of realization of each of the four schemes. The Neo-Functionalist perspective would seem to be quite relevant for this kind of exercise as it suggests that political integration could proceed easily as a spill-over from a process of economic integration. (O'Shea, 1995) It is quite remarkable in this respect that each of the four schemes strongly privileges economic integration. The League of Arab States has come back to remind Arab countries that it is necessary to take the Arab Common Market quite seriously, recalling that nothing came out of the agreement to establish an Arab common market in 1957 nor of the Council of Arab Economic Unity that started operations in 1964. (Khouri, 1990) The most concrete idea that came out of Islamist governments in the Middle East was promotion of their economic cooperation through meetings of the Islamic Group of 8. The Barcelona Declaration calls for the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Free trade Area by the year 2010. Finally, one of the early resolutions of the Conferences of Economic Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa was the proposal to establish an economic community for this area. This emphasis on economic integration is quite symptomatic of a specific moment in the evolution of the international system when economic groupings among states have become a major feature of international and even global politics. However, the Neo-Functionalist School has been criticized for neglecting the role of nationalist feelings, rivalries among states and security considerations. (O'Shea, 1995) It would be useful to complement Neo-Functionalist analysis by that of other schools. The Interdependence School, identified with writings of Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, has become popular. However, analysis along the lines set forth by Karl Deutsch of the process of regional political integration fits better with the Middle Eastern scene, where no great interdependence of states exists yet, but where security considerations take precedence over all other determinants of state actions. (Deutsch, 1969)

According to the Neo-Functionalist School, the test of success of the integration process is the shift of citizens' loyalties away from national

institutions to new supranational institutions. This test, in the particular case of the Arab world, would be manifested in the shift of loyalties from country-based structures to new regional ones. The mechanism would be the gradual success of integration at the sector level, or in a non-political domain, and then its spillover into the domain of politics.

Without going into the details of Neo-Functionalist analysis, it is quite certain that none of the four schemes reflects the Neo-Functionalist logic. Some are too ambitious, aiming at the establishment of a new economic community covering the whole area of the Middle East and North Africa without specifying the steps to be taken to reach this goal. This is the case of the Middle East arrangement supported by the USA and Israel, as well as the proposal to move to Arab economic unity. Others do not formulate concrete mechanisms to realize regional economic integration, as is the case of ideas of economic cooperation among the Islamic Group of Eight. The proposal to establish a free trade area between Europe and the Mediterranean countries would seem closer to the Neo-Functionalist logic as all it requires is the elimination of trade barriers among countries that are already tied together by an intense network of economic relations. Moreover, these countries are called upon to eliminate such barriers in terms of other contractual agreements, flowing particularly from the new GATT treaty of 1994 and the accords that many of the Mediterranean countries have with the IMF. The Barcelona Declaration offers some incentives to these countries to drop trade barriers in the form of promised economic and financial assistance from the EC. The officials believe also that the setting up of such a trade bloc corresponds well with the global trend, along the lines of NAFTA in North America, the expansion of the EC in Europe, ASEAN in South East Asia and APEC in Asia and the Pacific. However, it is quite difficult to imagine any substantial shift of loyalties on the part of Arab citizens towards the Barcelona institutions or those of an Economic Community of the MENA region. Public opinion polls in Europe as well as results of referenda on the Maastricht Treaty show clearly that such shift of loyalties to the new European institutions has not taken place yet, despite a common culture in Europe. Diversity of cultures, collective memories of recent conflicts and uneven gains from economic integration, particularly between Arab and non-Arab countries preclude the emergence of such new loyalties

in the case of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership or the MENA arrangements in the near future.

In his classic *The Political Community and North Atlantic Area*, the late Karl Deutsch suggested that the rise of a new political community bringing together existing states would depend very much on the states' perception of a common security threat, the presence of a regional catalyst and a favorable, encouraging role played by external actors. (Deutsch et al, 1969) One could argue that the two schemes which come from regional actors, namely the Arab nationalist and the Islamist projects assume the presence of a common threat to national security, embodied in Israel in one case and in a hostile West in the case of the Islamist project. However, neither of these seems to be an immediate threat to **all** these countries. Apart from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan and the Palestinians, the most immediate threat to survival in most other Arab countries are either domestic actors such as the Islamist movement in Egypt, Algeria, or they are representatives of domestic ethnic group as the Kurds in Turkey or the Southern people in the case of Sudan, or even a neighboring country such as Iraq in the case of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia in the case of Qatar. (Barnet, 1997).

The presence of a regional catalyst would have enhanced perception of the common threat. That role was played by Egypt in the Arab world in the 1950's. At present, there is no single state in the region that could play this role, as the distribution of multi-dimensional power is not wide enough among countries of the region to make one of them a regional catalyst. Israel enjoys tremendous technological, economic, military and political power compared to any other state in the region, but is viewed by many other Arab and Islamic states as either a national security threat or a rival power. The question posed by the former Israeli prime minister about the date of Israel's entry into the Arab League was treated more as a silly joke rather than a serious proposal. The key regional actors at present are Israel, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt. While the latter three favor a higher degree of inter-Arab cooperation, the experience of the Damascus Declaration, with its initial goal of establishing a subregional security system scaled down to regular consultations among its seven members, demonstrates that even within this small circle of Arab states, Saudi Arabia is quite reluctant to rely much on its Arab partners for its security. (Olwi,

1992). Relations between these parties and Non-Arab states is one of rivalry if not of latent conflict. This was clearly manifested recently in relations between Iran and Turkey, Egypt and Iran, Syria and Turkey. (Seoudi, 1991)

Influential external actors, the USA and the European Union, have their own goals and they definitely do their utmost to reach them, including thwarting attempts to realize rival projects. The US is acting forcefully to bring Arab countries into a Middle Eastern arrangement, is openly hostile to Pan-Arab or Islamist projects, and does not show much enthusiasm for the Barcelona procedures. Exclusion of the Gulf countries so far could be a response to the wish of European countries to have a separate arrangement between the EC and the Gulf Cooperation Council. It could also reflect recognition on their part that the Gulf is a sphere of American or British influence. The EC countries have put the Euro-Mediterranean economic space on their agenda, and some of them, particularly France, Italy, Spain and Germany, have concerns with migration that would support their continued interest in social and political stability in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The establishment of the free trade area with these Mediterranean countries and the promise of economic and financial assistance to them are viewed by European countries to be a means to that end. These countries show their indifference towards the Pan-Arab project, and some of them are quite wary of any talk about an Islamic community, particularly when that notion is supported by the Iranian government. They are also less than enthusiastic towards a Middle Eastern arrangement supported by the US. Their reluctance to join the MENA Bank is a sign of their refusal to foot the bill for American ideas while remaining junior partners to the USA in a region to which they feel much closer.

The future architecture of the Arab world and the Middle East will therefore reflect the relationship of rivalry, conflict and resistance among the actors who are identified most closely with each of these four models. However, as some of them have more strength than others, it is likely that a scheme backed by powers of the North will have more chance of being realized, unless the resistance they engender limits their implementation in this region. The Euro-Mediterranean "partnership" will most probably become a feature of the economic and political landscape of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Libya could join, but it is quite doubtful that it will incorporate the Gulf region because of opposition by both the USA and

some Gulf countries such as Kuwait and probably Saudi Arabia as well. The Middle East arrangement might be partly realized, between Israel, Jordan and a Palestinian entity. Other key Arab parties would be quite reluctant to extend to Israel any kind of privileged status implied in the establishment of a free trade area, even with a complete settlement of the Arab Israeli dispute. Its superior military power would make these countries, particularly those of the Arab Mashreq, continue to perceive it as a threat to their national security.

It is likely that some progress will be made along the path of increased Arab cooperation, either within the framework of a regional or sub-regional arrangement such as the Damascus Declaration, or at a bilateral level. Egypt has established such committees with Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and Libya. These committees play a role in facilitating trade relations and establishing joint projects. However, it is doubtful that a common Arab market including all Arab countries will see the light of the day in the near future. The difficulties that limited both its membership and its realization in the past, competitive economic structures among some countries, disparities in levels of socio-economic development among others and political rivalries, are still there.

The Islamist project is the least likely candidate to shape evolution of the Arab world in future. It may be too early to judge this new venture, which was still unfolding at the time of the writing of this chapter, but the project suffers from some key weaknesses. It is not only disliked by some foreign actors and resisted by others. It is also fiercely resisted by nearly all governments in the Arab world and the Middle East, with the exception of those of Iran and Sudan. It is also opposed by influential domestic forces, most notably by the upper middle classes, with their supporters in the civilian and military bureaucracies. Whatever schemes of cooperation under the Islamic banner might be accepted by states in the region, they would be undertaken only as lip service to the Islamist cause in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of an Arab and Middle Eastern public that continues to cherish Islamic values. They are unlikely to be accepted as a step towards the establishment of an Islamic Umma, governed by the Shari'a, a project that is most feared by all these governments.

The preceding analysis is based on a reading of current trends in the Arab world and the Middle East. It goes without saying that if these trends

change, then the analysis based on them would be invalid to the extent of their change. However, the only significant change that might occur in future is increased inter-Arab cooperation through coordination of policies towards Israel and a higher degree of economic cooperation. Continuation of Israeli policies ignoring the legitimate rights of Palestinians and the necessity of exchanging territories in the Golan and South Lebanon for peace could drive the Arabs to consolidate their economic and political ties as the most effective response to a real Israeli threat to their pan-Arab and national security.

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