

THOUGHTS ON A NEW SECURITY ARRANGEMENT: FOCUSING ON THE MIDDLE EAST CASE

International security structures and arrangements have not yet been adapted to the geopolitical and economic shifts that have taken place over the last two decades. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have taught valuable lessons to various global actors about the importance of managing security cooperation. This article aims to explore thoughts on a new global security arrangement to coordinate efforts of the democracies of the world. The article focuses in particular on the Middle East to describe how the envisaged security arrangement could be used to coordinate the constructive engagement of the democracies of the world in the Middle East.

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The end of the Cold War and the resulting changes in the global political alignments necessitate the adaptation of international security arrangements. The rise of terrorism as a major threat to the whole world requires new perspectives in international security cooperation. In particular, the lack of stability in the Middle East places the region at the center of the debate on global security.

Unfortunately, changes in international security arrangements have been slow and inadequate. Since the end of the Cold War, the United Nations has not been able to play an effective role on the security front. Meanwhile, NATO members have been slow in repositioning NATO to take on new roles after its original mission was accomplished.

New international political arrangements are required to accommodate the new geopolitical and economic trends. The economic centre of gravity of the world is gradually shifting from North America and Europe to Asia. The purchasing power parity adjusted total GDP of Asia will exceed the sum of those of North America and Europe in the second half of this decade. On the other hand, the United States is still the only global power able to and interested in taking an active role in world security. Europe, due to its demographics, is keen to just keep out of trouble. China and India are rising industrial powers which are likely to increase their weight in political affairs. Most commodities are in the hands of less developed countries in the former Soviet Union, Middle East, Southeast Asia and Latin America. Most of Africa is decimated by poverty, political instability and AIDS. Most of the Islamic world suffers from a deficit of political liberty and institutionalization, keeping especially Arab countries at living standards far below their per capita incomes would suggest.

Terrorism has replaced warfare between competing political regimes as the main global security theme. The Bush Administration in the U.S. has correctly identified that the lack of political freedoms and economic development around the world are serious contributing factors to the rise of terrorism. With the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. has proven its willingness to act on this position, unilaterally, if necessary. However, the lack of unity among democracies of the world is reducing the efficiency of the fight against terrorism. When one compares the experience in Afghanistan, where most of the world acted in unison with the experience in Iraq, where the U.S. acted with a relatively small alliance, it is clear that the US had more success in creating a perception of legitimacy in Afghanistan than Iraq. Local and regional acceptance has facilitated the establishment of post-invasion stability and security in Afghanistan, relative to Iraq. □

The falling out over Iraq may have had a positive impact in the long term. On one hand, the U.S. recognized the difficulty of acting alone. On the other hand, European countries opposed to the Iraq war realized that the U.S. will move regardless of what they do. It seems that both sides are now prepared to work

together on similar problems in the future, putting together U.S. “hard power” with European “soft power”.

NATO is currently the only well organized international institution able to play a meaningful role in world security. The UN has been a success in human development and social issues, but a failure in security matters. The EU has proven that it takes a very long time for united foreign policy and military capability to be created even in a region where economic and legal integration are commonplace. Hence, citizens and taxpayers of the members of NATO have a right to demand more from NATO. Given its past success and its immense institutional experience, it would be a great waste not to use NATO against new challenges in the 21st century.

The mobilization of NATO to address problems around the world will require radical adjustments to its structure and membership. The original NATO concept of an alliance of North America and Europe is no longer sufficient. During the Cold War, Europe was the most important area of competition and confrontation between democracies and communist regimes, so NATO was designed accordingly.

In the post Cold War world, there is no serious competition between alternative political regimes, and the most important crisis points are in Asia, such as the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the Korean peninsula. Therefore, a substantially different security architecture is called for. A security alliance of democracies spanning the whole world rather than just North America and Europe needs to be considered. NATO is the forum where the most experienced and talented security experts of Western democracies have been getting together over five decades to devise solutions to major security threats of the day, so there is no better place to start than NATO to tackle the current major global security issues.

An international security structure that can be both internally cohesive and externally functional needs to have two constituencies. A strategic alliance of democracies with common human rights standards and free markets could form a core, coordinating their foreign policies and military capabilities to counter security threats as well as to promote mutually agreed values. This grouping would naturally be led by the United States. Working with this strategic alliance, there would be a community of major world powers to ensure stability in all regions and to coordinate the fight against terrorism.

NATO is well suited to be the strategic alliance of the democracies of the world. The European Union could join as one entity rather than individual countries, if it chooses. A united EU in NATO would make the functioning of NATO simpler and ensure that Europe is a serious complement as well as a balancing factor to the U.S. All stable democracies around the world should be invited to the new NATO – Japan, Australia and New Zealand, Canada and Mexico, Turkey and Balkan countries (individually until they become full members of the EU,

and via EU membership afterwards if the EU chooses to act as a bloc), Brazil, Chile, South Africa, India, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia would be natural members. Israel and Palestine should be invited when they manage to agree on a stable two-state solution to their conflict.

NATO could expand the “Partnership for Peace” (PfP) program to become an effective world body to ensure stability in all regions and to coordinate the fight against terrorism. Major regional powers which are not yet stable democracies, such as Egypt, Pakistan and China, could be invited to the PfP program alongside Russia, Ukraine and other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. Any country in the partnership which establishes a stable track record as a democracy would be invited to join NATO. The security roles of the UN would either be eliminated, converting the UN into a development and humanitarian institution, or restructured around the partnership for peace program.

The acceptance of Eastern European countries (EECs) into NATO can be the first step in this direction. Eastern European expansion has not significantly improved NATO’s military capabilities, but it has established a benchmark as NATO’s first expansion since the 1950s. This precedent can be used to design an accession process for other democracies of the world.

The Middle East can be chosen as the first region to use the envisaged new security alignment. The Middle East is where the new geopolitical reality causes the highest level of disturbance, so it is a natural choice to start with. □

The lack of political liberty and institutionalization in the Arab world is keeping citizens of these countries living at standards far below their per capita incomes would suggest. The chronic lack of representation of women in the public sphere has also been a limiting factor on economic progress due to the resulting underutilization of half of the region’s human resources. The Arab world has missed the global industrialization train, leaving labor markets in Arab countries unable to digest the millions of young men joining the ranks of the unemployed every year. This demographic pressure coupled with the lack of economic and political progress creates the ideal breeding ground for radical political movements and global terrorism.

It is interesting to note that the Arab world does not have a single large scale state which is properly functioning. A comparison with neighboring Turkey can be useful in this regard. Turkey has managed to create a functioning state, a modern society and a democracy despite being one of the few countries in the region without oil reserves. Even Iran (though far behind Turkey in institutionalization, industrialization and democracy) has managed to create a functional state, significantly ahead of the Arab world, despite having a theocratic regime for over twenty-five years.

To be able to correctly analyze the malaise in the Arab world and to come up with solutions, we must look back in history and identify the roots of the lack of institutional development. The Arab lands were separated from the Ottoman Empire by force in the early 20th century. The colonial powers which ran the Middle East after the Ottomans did not regard to task of creating institutions a priority. The Ottoman government, which treated Arabs as its subjects along with Anatolian Turks, felt it to be its responsibility to embark on as much modernization in Arab lands as its resources allowed. Colonial rulers, on the other hand, focused on keeping out of trouble and generally did not feel that they had a mission to modernize the Arab lands. The slow and hesitant modernization under Ottoman rule picked up speed in Republican Turkey and created a “can do” attitude in Turkey. By 1945, Turkey had completed its institutional infrastructure and was more or less ready for integration with the Western world as a poor but equal partner. Arab countries, on the other hand, had little institutional experience when they achieved their independence before and after World War II.

Modernization in the Ottoman Empire was driven from the top, just like it was in Japan, China and Russia. The newly formed institutions initiating the modernization drive were all state sponsored. When Arab lands were separated from Turkey in the early 20th century, the modernizing institutions were decapitated. What was left of the central government bureaucracy and the education system was pulled back to Turkey after the First World War. With the departure of Imperial officers, Arab countries had to start their institutionalization from ground zero.

The most important task facing the Arab world in the 21st century is institution building. Removing the most oppressive tyrants in the region by outside force is a step in the right direction, but is not enough. The reform process in the Arab world needs to become internally driven and institutionalized. Arab states and civil society have to develop to become able to take on robust modernizing roles in their societies.

Creating stable and functional democracies in the Arab world is the final stage of a long and arduous process of institutionalization. The following steps will have to be taken patiently by Arab countries, aided by the democracies of the world:

- security to be established where it is lacking (it is difficult to get ordinary people interested in democratic politics where there is no security);
- rule of law; by the removal of tyrants if necessary;
- transparency and accountability of government, even in transition situations like Afghanistan and Iraq;
- basic human rights principles and freedom of thought, expression and the press, even if imposed from outside at the beginning;
- Arab oil wealth to be spent on economic and social development across the

region rather than imports of luxury goods from the West;

- economic freedoms and a supportive environment for small scale enterprise;
- deepening of government and civil institutions.

Elections will be meaningful and the resulting democracy will be robust only once these prerequisites are in place.

We cannot roll back time and make up for several decades of missed institutionalization. However, there is a lesson that can be drawn from the Eastern European experience after the fall of communism. Eastern Europe had several decades of instability after the fall of the Habsburg Empire, just like the Middle East had after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In the end, the economic and political integration achieved under the Habsburg Empire was repeated under the EU umbrella - EU has effectively delivered all the benefits of the Habsburg Empire without the domination of a single ethnic group. A parallel international structure has to be created in the Middle East to create political and economic integration between Arab countries and to ensure the integration of Middle Eastern economies to the world economy beyond the oil sector. For instance, Arab countries which make progress on the democratization front can be invited to join NATO.

Democracies of the world have to play a constructive role in the Arab world, from a philosophical perspective, as well as for self interest. Philosophically, democracies validate and rejuvenate themselves by converting their neighbors, as exemplified by the experience of the EU on Eastern Europe. More countries becoming free market democracies around the world means more stability and more prosperity for everyone. Security concerns, on the other hand, is the basis for self interest in playing an active role in the region - a chronically unstable Middle East with failing states will breed terrorists that threaten the security of all democracies of the world.

There are three simple and relatively inexpensive steps that can be taken by major powers around the world, to make economic development, democratization and the fight against terrorism easier across the world:

- Developed countries should stop arms exports to the third world: As the world has decided that cutting supply is key in the fight against drugs, we should be honest and do the same on the security front – major exporters US, Russia and France would need to take the lead.
 - Establishing global free trade in agriculture and textiles: Getting the world's poor the benefits of free trade is more important than subsidizing rich farmers of developed countries. Rather than subsidizing rich farmers around the world and spending money on expensive anti-terrorist measures at the same time, we could cut the first and reduce the second, saving very large sums at once.
 - Investing in alternative energy to reduce dependence on oil: Higher oil prices
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means transfers from democracies as well as the poorest countries around the world to the Middle East and former Soviet Union. This flow feeds oppressive regimes in countries where terrorists do most of their recruiting. Some of this money inevitably finds its way into the hands of terrorists. The less the world depends on oil, the easier will be the fight against terrorism. □

None of these three concepts are novel – they may even be rated as obvious by many. However, the fact that no concrete steps are taken around any of the three concepts shows that there are serious practical difficulties. We may be facing a case of prisoner’s dilemma – there is no advantage to a country to be the first mover. This dilemma can only be overcome by determined leadership. Given that the US is currently the strongest military, political and economic player in the world as well as the flag bearer in the war against terrorism, it is the natural candidate for this leadership role. Concrete steps in reducing arms exports, expanding the scope of free trade and investing in alternative energy sources would be very helpful for the US in providing support for its stated global vision, establishing credibility around the world and complementing the demonstration of military strength.

Beyond these three general measures, democracies of the world have to engage the Middle East the same way the U.S. engaged Europe in the aftermath of World War II. However, the question of credibility is of utmost importance in the Middle East in any external intervention in the region. The West, especially the US, will have to implement confidence building measures specifically for the Middle East.

Generations of Arab youth were brought up thinking that the reason why the Arab world fell behind was Western intervention. As Arabs fell behind in the development game, the establishment of Israel in 1948 and its repeated military successes against its Arab neighbors led to the Arab political scene being dominated by the question of how to deal with Israel rather than how to achieve economic and social development. As Israel was strongly supported by the West, Arab rulers had an opportunity to defuse domestic opposition by channeling it towards anti-Western feelings. It was easier to blame it all on the West than admit failure.

The relations between the U.S. and EU and Turkey could be turned into a contributing factor in establishing Western credibility in the Middle East. Creating a success story for East/West dialogue in the context of Turkey may be a much more realistic short term goal than finding a solution to the Israel/Palestine dispute. A concrete step to challenge the “Clash of Civilizations” hypothesis and to discredit *Osama bin Laden* in the Arab world would be the successful integration of Turkey into the EU. A Turkey which is firmly anchored in the EU would become an invaluable catalyst for change in the Middle East. □

The U.S., EU and Turkey can achieve a lot, acting in unison. Turkey can act as a bridge between the Western world and the Middle East. The U.S. can take the

lead in security matters. The EU can take the lead in the economic integration of Arab countries with each other and the rest of the world. Turkey can share its one century long democratization experience which is unique in the region. A redesigned NATO could be used as the umbrella organization under which the joint US-EU-Turkey efforts would be coordinated.

Within this general definition of roles, we can think of some specific areas of focus for the U.S., EU, Turkey and NATO.

- On the security front, the U.S. forces should stay in Iraq until the Iraqi army and police force up to the task of independently maintaining security across the country. NATO forces can be deployed to help peacekeeping in Palestine and Lebanon.
- On the rule of law, the EU can provide financial aid, training and expertise to develop Arab legal institutions, applying the lessons learned from Eastern Europe.
- On economic integration, the EU can expand its partnership programs for Middle Eastern countries to provide the necessary incentives. Trade liberalization with the Middle East may end up much less costly for Europe than the instability in the region and heavy immigration pressures.
- The U.S. and Europe should jointly put pressure on the wealthier Arab states to put their oil wealth to good use. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies need to set aside substantial parts of their oil revenues to help the rest of the Arab world. The U.S. and Europe should match Gulf aid if necessary. □
- On the building of government and civic institutions, assistance from the EU □ and Turkey will be critical. The EECs which have recently joined the EU can lend some of their EU integration task forces to help institutional development in the Arab world. Turkey can take the lead in training Middle Eastern central and local government bureaucrats, army officers and police forces. U.S., EU and Turkish NGOs can train young Arabs for government positions, NGO roles and entrepreneurship.
- NATO can take the lead in establishing and deepening security cooperation between democracies of the world and the Middle East. Peacekeeping in the region would be a starting point, followed by the training of Middle Eastern army and police forces and the establishment of a permanent forum to discuss regional cooperation and security strategy.

The situation in the Middle East is difficult, but world democracies can rise to meet the challenge. We have three success stories to look up to in the post World War II period - Western Europe after World War II, Eastern Europe in 1990-2000 and East and Southeast Asia 1960 onwards. As the U.S. had a leading role in all three transformations, it is natural to expect it to play a leading role in the Middle East going forward. But the EU has also played a leading role in two out of three situations, and the valuable experience gained in European integration could be applied to the Middle East.

Economic integration has been the main driver of prosperity around the world in the post World War II period. Global cooperation on security matters is the next big challenge. World democracies have to realize that long term prosperity cannot be taken for granted in a world with major international security threats.

Hard work is required to ensure regional stability around the world and to significantly reduce the threat from terrorism. Democratization, economic development and active security cooperation around the world are the three areas that demand attention. Experienced international institutions created in the Cold War era should be transformed to add value in the new global geopolitical reality, starting with NATO. Just as GATT became WTO and EEC became EU, NATO should evolve from solely a transatlantic security arrangement into an alliance of all of the world's democracies for security cooperation and the promotion of shared values.