

# TORN BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

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EUROPE is in search of a new approach to the Middle East. Since the end of World War II, European policies in the Middle East have been torn between the continent's geographic contiguity, historical familiarity, and privileged trade links with the Middle East, and its ideological-strategic association with the United States. "Atlanticism" meant a predisposition to recognize the preponderant position of the United States in the Middle East and to adjust to it. A more independent line and a will to challenge US preponderance generally have been characteristic less of newly assertive Europeanists than of old-style nationalists. General Charles de Gaulle's *politique arabe* was a natural appendix to his decision to withdraw from the military branch of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1966. The aggressive oil initiatives of Enrico Mattei of Italy's Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi were aimed at challenging US companies' predominance in the Middle East oil market. Greece's generally pro-Arab line basically had been a way to show some independence from Washington, which Athens perceived as being too complacent toward Turkey. Developing a specifically European line toward the Middle East, therefore, has been the result of a worldview in which some European governments wanted to express their independence from the United States and, to an extent, their unease with the constraints of the East-West divide and Cold War alignments.

Now that the bipolar divide has disappeared, the natural reaction in Europe has been for states to forgo attempts to assert their independence. For example, with varying levels of enthusiasm, European governments joined the US-led coalition against Iraq in 1990, expressed support for the reinvigorated US-

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engineered Arab-Israeli peace process, and swallowed their anger at having been deprived of most postwar trade dividends in the gulf. Greece, Spain—in November 1993 Juan Carlos became the first European monarch to visit Israel—and the Vatican have normalized their relations with Israel. Signs of benign neglect are numerous. In France, a country that had gone further than any other in stressing an independent role in Middle Eastern affairs, former foreign minister Roland Dumas—a socialist—emphatically wrote the obituary of his country's *politique arabe*, dismissing it as “a sheer illusion”; Prime Minister Edouard Balladur of the rightist, neo-Gaullist *Rassemblement pour la République* did not even mention the Middle East in his cabinet's two-hour *déclaration de politique générale* before the parliament. Crucial political events in Algeria, Egypt, and Lebanon have been met with much less concern than before. Aid has been partly redirected to other destinations, notably to the emancipated eastern half of Europe. Public interest in the Middle East appears to be limited when the issues at hand do not have clear domestic repercussions.

Beyond these regional adjustments to global change, a broad new vision of Europe's approach to the Middle East is yet to be formulated. Conceptually, there is indeed a basic unease in the very definition of the two terms—“Europe” and the “Middle East”—of this relationship. Only an arbitrary decision would help Europe in dealing with a plurality of definitions. If the Atlantic Ocean is the western limit of Europe, delineating its eastern border is somehow a mission impossible. Is membership in the European Union an overriding parameter? Does one agree with Ralf Dahrendorf, for whom “the European house ends where the Soviet Union, or whatever succeeds it, begins”?<sup>1</sup> Or, should one borrow from de Gaulle's vision of a Europe stretching “from the Atlantic to the Urals”? The task of defining the Middle East has been one of the twentieth century's most dizzying—as well as frequent—quizzes. Now that the Soviet empire has disappeared, definitions have become even more complex, and the dual temptation is there to consider *Mitteleuropa* as an integral part of Europe, and to incorporate the Central Asian republics in any vision of the Middle East. No definition of either one of the two terms is beyond contest; no definition is innocent. Herein lies the organic shakiness of any discussion of Euro-Middle Eastern relations, the observer being asked to assume the existence of these two actors, to convince himself of their very existence and of their analytical relevance. It always will be possible to make a case for the non-existence of either one of these two terms.

Paradoxically, at least since 1945, only the introduction of a third term—“the United States”—into this shaky equation has made Euro-Middle Eastern relations politically relevant and intellectually substantive. Although European approaches to the Middle East often have been different from those of their US counterparts, there is a plurality of European national approaches, different from each other, or even contradictory to each other. On many issues, some European

1. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (London: Chatto, 1990), p. 13.

governments have been much closer to US policies than to their immediate neighbors' views. Pluralism, therefore, has been the essence of "Europeanness." This is embedded in the centuries-old strength of European nationalisms, and in the Middle Easterners' perceptions of the continent. Arabs, Iranians, and Turks have yet to be convinced that "France," "Britain," or "Germany"—categories with which they have been familiar through many past centuries—are becoming less relevant. Europeans also have to convince themselves and the world that being European does, indeed, decisively determine their political *weltanschauung*. It goes without saying that neither this fact nor its perception by others—notably by Middle Easterners—is established to the point of making these introductory observations a merely scholastic exercise.

From an historical perspective, the present could be considered exceptional. History, since the time of the Crusades, has been replete with European intimacy with the Middle East, a closeness that probably will be renewed in the future. Ellen Laipson rightfully noted that "Europe has, and is likely to continue to have, a more sustained and durable political, economic, and cultural presence in the region than either the United States or the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> As a result, there exists a widespread feeling of frustration with the present phase, in which Europe so clearly lacks the influence that it had for centuries and, in all likelihood, will have again in some not too distant future. Compounding this lack of influence is the feeling that the Middle East could constitute a threat to European security, notably through the proliferation of ballistic missile technology that places Europe in range, but not the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Many Europeans think that US involvement in the Middle East is somehow a transient factor triggered by oil imports, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and containment of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union no longer threatens US interests, and although gulf oil can hardly be replaced with some other source of energy, European dependence on it is much greater than is that of the United States. It also seems possible that the Arab-Israeli conflict may be resolved in the not too distant future. For all these reasons, it is possible to imagine a gradual decrease in

2. Ellen Laipson, "Europe's Role in the Middle East: Enduring Ties, Emerging Opportunities," *Middle East Journal* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1990), p. 7.

3. The fall of two Libyan missiles (that missed their target) on an Italian island in 1986 is cited often as an example of this reality. Answering callers' questions on French radio during the 1991 gulf war, this author encountered dozens of queries about the reach of Iraqi missiles. Proliferation is becoming a very sensitive question in all European military establishments (and among Euro-parliamentarians as well). Europe has yet to reconcile this new worry with its arms industry's active mercantilism, as well as with Israel's dominant position in nonconventional military technology. How could Europe prevent Muslim countries from acquiring similar technology when Israel is already a nuclear power? How could it guarantee that Middle Eastern missiles remain directed exclusively at Middle Eastern targets when they can reach European shores? The renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, scheduled for before 1995, already is triggering a debate in Europe: Will Europe call for aggressive deproliferation measures, such as the systematic destruction of nonconventional arsenals in potentially hostile countries, or for the development of a diplomatic multilateral preventive approach? On both sides of the Atlantic, non-proliferation is viewed as a priority, but a consensus on ways and means to achieve it is yet to emerge.

US involvement in Middle Eastern affairs at the end of this "transitional phase," during which European preponderance in the Middle East has been challenged, indeed, overshadowed and replaced, by that of the United States.

### *RATHER THE UNITED NATIONS THAN THE UNITED STATES*

Aware of their sensitivity to Middle Eastern issues, and of their limited influence in affecting events there, European countries are reluctant to leave the region wholly to the United States. Significant European economic interests in the area, reliance on Middle Eastern oil and gas exports, and public opinion concerns make it difficult for any European leader to condone passive behavior, although smaller states—such as the three Benelux countries—are more willing to do so than Britain or France; of course, the latter two held, at least until the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, dominant imperial positions in that part of the world and have not entirely relinquished their wish of reinstating their past role.

There is a general trend that makes the United Nations a palatable framework through which Europe can approach the Middle East. In the UN Security Council, Western Europe is represented more than adequately with two permanent members. In the General Assembly, European countries can count on the support of many of their former colonies in the Third World, notably the African countries. Consequently, when it comes to the Middle East, continental Europe often has spontaneously based its views on UN Security Council resolutions and preferred operating through UN institutions. This reliance on the United Nations has served to mark some distance from Washington and provided common ground for a wide variety of national attitudes. (The election of a francophone general-secretary in the person of Boutros Boutros-Ghali is viewed as an additional asset, at least in France.)

In dealing with the Middle East, European policies are torn between globalism and regionalism. The globalists are leaders involved in foreign affairs who are sensitive to their countries' position in the world, while regionalists are more sensitive to their countries' bilateral relations. Consequently, globalists tend to approach the Middle East from an international perspective. This was illustrated consistently during the 1991 gulf war, when France and Britain clearly let their alliance with the United States override their own special links to Iraq and Kuwait. They were anxious not to convey the impression across the Atlantic of being unreliable partners in times of need. Fearing for their rank in the world (and for their position vis-à-vis a resurgent, reunified Germany), London and, to a lesser extent, Paris made themselves the echo, when they were not the instigators, of US firmness in dealing with the Iraqi challenge.<sup>4</sup> Globalism meant a joint Western effort to punish the aggressor.

4. Public approval ratings for the British and French governments remained high during the gulf crisis. In France, 75–79 percent of people surveyed responded favorably to the government's position. One minister, Michel Vauzelle, put it in these terms: "France wants to be present at the post-Kuwait war regional Yalta." *Le Monde*, February, 9, 1991.

Nationalists of various colors tended, on the other hand, to use regionalism as a justification for their opposition to aligning with US views, even when they had been indifferent or hostile toward Iraq. This was particularly clear in France, where the government rapidly joined the anti-Iraqi coalition, while leaders as different as Jean-Pierre Chevènement (a socialist), Jean-Marie Le Pen (a far right nationalist), and Georges Marchais (a communist) came to oppose the coalition on the assumption of French special views of (and interests in) the Middle East.

In other countries, most notably in Germany and Italy, opposition to the coalition was rooted in popular, still vivid pacifism rather than in some special view of the Middle East. These two countries have had a consistent mercantilist approach toward the Middle East. When the crisis erupted, public opinion was clearly less enthusiastic for military participation (which for Germany at that time was still prohibited by the constitution). A few mass demonstrations against the war took place, and it was common to see Italian pacifists preaching their opposition to war in Italian city centers. Polls showed that a substantial number of Spaniards thought of the coalition attack on Iraq as "an unjust war." Many critics of the coalition were, indeed, old-style pacifists who had spent most of their preceding years opposing the deployment of US missiles in Europe, or calling for neutrality in the East-West conflict. They basically opposed their countries' participation in the coalition on the basis of anti-US feelings that sometimes dated back to the Vietnam era. They were no advocates of some special vision of Euro-Arab relations; they were, on the contrary, inverted globalists.

Opposition to the "leave-it-to-the-United States" syndrome has also been illustrated in European reactions to the launching of the Arab-Israeli peace process in Madrid in 1991. At that time, the Netherlands, which tends to be pro-US, was chairing the then-European Community (now, and henceforth, the European Union), a fact that made it easier for the community to content itself with an observer status at the peace talks and a supportive speech in Madrid. Not all Europeans were happy with this limited role while an already decaying Soviet Union was given a much-coveted "sponsor" status, and the Egyptians were represented by a full-fledged delegation. Europe's restricted position at the Madrid conference was too reminiscent for many European officials of the unilaterally US-managed Camp David process in 1978-79. Some Europeans expressed considerable skepticism about the structure of the new peace talks and indicated clearly their determination to widen the Europeans' role. This meant, among other initiatives, an active rapprochement between Israel and several European countries and, indirectly, a much tougher stand on Palestinians accused of past violent behavior (as demonstrated when George Habash, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, tried to obtain medical treatment in a Paris hospital in February 1992).

Since the bilateral peace talks were being singlehandedly managed by Washington, Europeans tried to follow them through a revolving troika while devising for themselves a more determining role in the multilateral talks, partic-

ularly in regard to the economic cooperation and refugees committees. They partially succeeded, although the dominant feeling on the continent remained that Europe had not been given a satisfactory share in the process—in its concept, in the bilateral talks, nor in the committee on arms control—but was being asked to eventually sustain a potentially substantial share of any cost needed at the end of the process to rebuild and develop the area.

This situation is a far cry from an era when Europe had indicated specifically its distance from the United States by developing a more balanced approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although reluctant to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians,” the European Union, beginning in 1973, had gradually recognized that the United States was too closely aligned with Israeli positions. This recognition led to the Venice Declaration of 1980, and then to the “Dublin formula,” in which the Palestinians were to be represented within a joint Arab delegation for the Euro-Arab dialogue. While still ostracized by US diplomacy, PLO chairman Yasir Arafat visited many European capitals, including Paris in 1989. The end of the Cold War, by terminating the superpowers’ confrontation in the Middle East, deprived Europeans of the opportunity of devising a third approach between alignment on either one of the two sides. Russia joined the process—“the only game in town”—and Europe could choose only between two evils: accept a minor role in the peace talks, or leave them to the United States, as during the Camp David negotiations. With more or less enthusiasm, Europeans came to support the Madrid process, betting on a growing role while the process itself unfolded.<sup>5</sup>

The 1993 agreement between Israel and the PLO produced mixed European reactions. The accord proved correct the Europeans’ basic assumption that no progress could be made in the negotiations without prior mutual recognition by the two warring sides. They were gratified that the Norwegians were able to succeed where the Americans had shown impotence in pushing the negotiations forward. The Europeans, despite a certain smugness that US guidance of the peace process had proved insufficient, also observed that the US government was in a position to adjust to this breakthrough and to translate it into a political bonus for itself. The Oslo agreement and US diplomatic hesitations in the Clinton administration’s first year—together with active Israeli diplomatic efforts and Arab calls for European involvement—led European governments, not content

5. Attempts may have been made in the fall of 1992, at the apex of the US presidential campaign, to launch a unilateral French initiative, notably between Syria and Israel; they were rapidly discarded. Author’s interviews. The European Union provides some 15 million European currency units a year (1ecu = \$US1.146) to support the Palestinian economy of the occupied territories. *Al-Hayat*, November 8, 1993. In summer 1992, additional aid of \$80 million was disbursed to alleviate the negative effects of the gulf war on those areas. The European Union is also the major financial supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, to which some countries, such as Germany, also donate significant bilateral aid. *Al-Hayat*, October 28, 1993. Following the 1993 Israeli-PLO agreement, the Europeans devoted \$600 million until 1999 for the rehabilitation of the occupied territories’ economy. *Le Monde*, November 2, 1993.

with being the largest financial contributor to the peace process, to seek a larger political role in the process.

The past decade is characterized also by the growth of US military interventionism in the Middle East, a development that accompanied and probably accelerated the end of the Cold War. For a number of reasons, Washington traditionally had been reluctant to intervene in the Middle East. With the exception of going ashore in Lebanon in 1958, the United States tended to avoid direct military intervention. (Although there were nuclear alerts during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, these were in relation to potential Soviet intervention rather than in reaction to developments in the Middle East proper.) The past decade has witnessed the attempt to rescue US hostages in Iran in 1980, active support of the *mujahidin* guerrillas in Afghanistan throughout the 1980s, the 1983 bombardment of pro-Syrian targets in Lebanon by US marines participating in the multinational peacekeeping force, the April 1986 bombing raid on Libya that almost killed Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, and the April 1988 attacks against Iranian naval facilities in the gulf. Topping the list is the deployment of US forces against Iraq in the battle for Kuwait. One of George Bush's last actions as US president was the deployment of some 21,000 marines to Somalia in 1992.

As long as no US military interventions were taking place in the Middle East, Europeans supported the principle of strict nonintervention, showing much less concern for the presence of Soviet military experts in the area than their US counterparts. In the 1980s, Europe was embarrassed with almost each new US show of muscle. For example, the Italians clearly showed their displeasure with US strong-arm tactics during the 1985 *Achille Lauro* incident by refusing to support efforts by US military forces based in Italy to capture the Palestinian hijackers of the Greek cruise ship. In 1986, the French government refused to grant US military planes the right to fly over France en route to attack Libya. Greece was also far from wholeheartedly joining the US antiterrorism crusade. Europe's attitude began to change with the end of the Cold War, when it joined both the coalition against Iraq and operations in Somalia, while remaining generally opposed to the use of force in the former Yugoslavia until the February 1994 Sarajevo market shelling in which more than 60 people died. In most cases, Europe was left with the usual two choices: join a US initiative or be left on the sidelines. Unable to move independently in the Middle East—something that is still feasible in some African countries<sup>6</sup>—European governments can no longer count on a countervailing Soviet pole to express some “centrist” position of their own.

6. France, in particular, is still militarily active in sub-Saharan Africa, with no vocal opposition from, and sometimes with the support of, the United States. About 10,000 French soldiers are still deployed in Africa, while 15,000 others are ready for rapid intervention from bases in southern France. Is this an implicit “division of labor” between Paris and Washington? The question was more explicitly raised when the US marines were sent to Somalia, a country that lies astride the Middle East and black Africa. See further, “Africa’s Favourite Gendarme,” *Economist*, February 27, 1993.



The European alignment with US policy that marked the immediate post-Cold War period is being reviewed at present. Germany's participation in the UN operation in Somalia, once thought the beginning of a new German military role in the world,<sup>7</sup> ultimately produced mixed feelings when it appeared that US leadership on the Somalia front was inconsistent; German politicians who were supportive of the operation were dismayed to learn via radio about the planned 1994 US withdrawal from Somalia. In France, the rightist government elected in 1993 is showing much less interest in UN military expeditions after years of Paris being the major contributor of troops for UN peacekeeping operations. France also is questioning the usefulness and wisdom of the sanctions imposed on Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait. Although no French official has openly called for the lifting of these sanctions, there is some pressure from oil companies and industry to consider that possibility. (This is now openly echoed by French diplomacy as seen at a March 1994 UN Security Council meeting, to renew sanctions on Iraq, where a French proposal, endorsed by Russia and China, wanted to take into consideration the positive behavior of Iraqi authorities in matters of arms control.) Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi deputy prime minister, was allowed to enter France in fall 1993, officially "for medical treatment," and several high-ranking Iraqi civil servants from the oil and foreign affairs ministries had official talks in Paris in July 1993 and February 1994. For commercial and political reasons, Western European governments are not insensitive to Egyptian, Russian, and Turkish calls for a revision of the very restrictive status imposed on both Iraq and Libya.

A slow change is, therefore, noticeable. If, in the immediate post-Cold War era, European governments were aligned with US leadership on Middle Eastern issues, in the past year, the mixed signals from Washington, the acrimonious debate over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), tensions over the Bosnian issue, and US calls for a reorientation of the United States toward the Pacific are encouraging Europeans to devise a unified position of their own. This new trend has been strengthened recently by the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 and the transformation of the European Community into the European Union, as well as by the instatement of the Western European Union (WEU) as a response to the continent's security needs. Based on its Petersburg Declaration of June 1992, the WEU intends to contribute to the establishment of "a European security framework" whereby it develops an operational role (possibly in areas of the Middle East and North Africa) for humanitarian missions, evacuation of European nationals in countries where their lives are threatened,

7. In Germany, the constitutional court refused to forbid the use of German troops for medical, humanitarian, and transport jobs outside the realm of NATO. See "L'Allemagne répète son nouveau rôle international," *Libération*, November, 22, 1993. The issue of the use of German troops abroad is far from being settled, although it is possible that the deployment of these troops under a UN flag, far from those Central European areas where Germany had been actively expansionist, is more acceptable. See "Germany and Its Interests," *Economist*, November 20, 1993, pp. 19-23.

and peacekeeping as well as peace enforcement operations.<sup>8</sup> As for the European Union, the Maastricht Treaty reinforces structures for permanent consultations on foreign affairs and forms the foundation of a "common policy." Although majority rule is yet to be accepted by member states—notably by Britain—in diplomatic matters, the Europeans were able to devise a common position on North African questions at their 1992 Lisbon summit.<sup>9</sup>

### NATIONALISM AND HUMANITARIANISM

The traditional European view of the Middle East has often followed a class line. European political establishments have tended to be rather patronizing toward this area of their former colonial expansion, while public opinion has tended to view the Middle East with a mixture of fascination and fear. The end of the Cold War has made establishmentarians even less visionary, while public opinion seems to follow two contradictory paths. In many countries, neo-nationalist, chauvinistic trends have emerged with a clear anti-immigrant, and generally anti-Muslim, discourse. On the other hand, thousands of young Europeans are engaged in nongovernmental organizations' (NGOs) relief activities in large, impoverished parts of the Middle East. Today's neo-nationalism and humanitarianism are not only contemporary, but actually tend to reinforce each other. For example, both are based on the idea that the immediate Third World—particularly the Muslim one—is becoming too threatening to European societies' well-being, if not their national identities. To curb the threat, neo-nationalists want to close borders, and possibly send back millions of immigrant workers now residing in Europe to their countries of origin. Humanitarians, on the contrary, see the remedy in reaching out to these peoples and in helping them improve their lives in their home countries.

The two central factors explaining this new cleavage are widespread unemployment and the erosion of leftist ideologies. Unemployment has reached high levels: 22 percent in Spain, more than 12 percent in Belgium, France, and Italy, while worsening in other countries. The European average in 1993 was higher than 10 percent. Although it has been demonstrated often that citizens rarely rush to

8. The WEU's new flag has been raised, for the first time, on ships patrolling the Adriatic sea in order to enforce UN-imposed sanctions on Serbia. Although the relationship between the WEU and NATO is yet to be clearly defined—an alternative to the former or an adjunct force within its realm?—the Serbia operation is viewed as the beginning of a new era, although European discord on former Yugoslavia is great. For a consensual presentation of this issue, see Dieter Mahncke, *Parameters of European Security* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, WEU, 1993).

9. General stands on political issues are often easily reached by European leaders after agonizing preparatory meetings at lower levels in their bureaucracies. The translation of these general principles into actual policies is more problematic. When France, for example, decided to halt all forms of dialogue with Algeria's Islamists, other states were reluctant to follow suit. When both France and Germany decided to ban Kurdish Worker's Party activities in their countries, they successfully coordinated their clampdown on this organization. It is much easier to reach a common policy on Middle East-related security issues than on diplomatic issues that might have negative effects on European trade relations with the area.

perform menial jobs if and when migrant workers leave, chauvinistic populism has remained a potent vehicle for demagogic mobilization under such conditions. Jean-Marie Le Pen's right-wing National Front confirmed its appeal in France by gathering 13 percent of the vote in March 1993 parliamentary elections. In Italy, the emerging Northern Leagues have been as hostile to foreign workers as they have been toward providing large subsidies to their own underdeveloped south. For its part, the fascist Italian Socialist Movement recorded an enviable showing in November 1993 municipal elections. In Germany, disenchantment with reunification has drawn thousands of young Germans into neo-Nazi racist attacks on political refugees. In all European countries, the victims of this neo-nationalism have been overwhelmingly marked by their Middle Eastern origins as Arabs, Kurds, or Turks, although similar phenomena also have been recorded against immigrants from the former Eastern bloc. This resurgence of old stereotypes necessitates that any European approach to the Middle East start at home, as an embarrassing, indecisive, and sometimes contradictory mixture of reactions to domestic pressures and foreign policy initiatives.

The erosion of leftist ideologies ended the 1960s pattern of ideological solidarity with the Third World. No Europeans are now ready and willing to demonstrate their support by joining the Algerian National Liberation Front or being trained militarily in Palestinian camps. Solidarity is now expressed in humanitarian terms, rather than in diplomatic or ideological ones. The past decade, therefore, witnessed the flowering of dozens of NGOs operating in the Middle East, with less and less interest in the causes of the peoples they were helping. Afghanistan was a watershed: It caused many formerly leftist European intellectuals to start looking at the United States in a much more favorable light, and others to express both their rejection of communism and their generosity toward the Third World by helping the Afghan mujahidin. These new humanitarians, however, could not adjust to intricate Afghani politics, let alone to the emerging anti-Western chauvinism within mujahidin ranks. What is left of this bitter experiment is an insistence on relief tasks and human rights advocacy, and a deeply felt alienation from intricate Middle Eastern politics. The French physicians who started Médecins sans frontières, for example, created an NGO that has branches in most EU countries, and by itself has involved thousands of European employees and volunteers all over the world. The group is developing a worldview of itself, "*sans-frontiérisme*," which is firmly antiracist at home and critical of Third World dictators abroad, and which is quite popular among younger Europeans.<sup>10</sup>

This new humanitarian approach has recently taken a more politicized turn. Humanitarianism is not simply an NGO issue—although most NGOs survive

10. See Médecins sans frontières, *Populations en danger* (Paris: Hachette, 1992). The movement defines itself as a member of "the only party which is resilient to the fall of ideologies: solidarity."

thanks to public subsidies, notably from the European Union—but has become a state affair. This change occurred in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 gulf war, embodied in the support given to the Iraqi Kurds in the spring of 1991. British prime minister John Major made support for the Kurds a theme of his legislative campaign, while French president François Mitterrand established a fully fledged cabinet portfolio for humanitarian action throughout the world. He appointed to this position Bernard Kouchner, the founder of two major relief NGOs. Kouchner quickly became the most popular member of the cabinet. He took credit for UN Security Council Resolution 688 on the protection of the Iraqi Kurds and for many General Assembly statements. Humanitarianism, therefore, was “nationalized,” even militarized with the deployment of military contingents for humanitarian missions in a dozen locations in southern Iraq. This state involvement led many Europeans, in quite stunning numbers, to support the use of force for humanitarian purposes. A poll published in April 1993 in *La Croix* showed a rate of support among Frenchmen of 76 percent for such policies.<sup>11</sup>

This change in the humanitarian approach, although very popular on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, was viewed with increasing hostility on the southern shore. Most new, militarized humanitarian missions were related to an Islamic area: Bosnia, Eritrea, Kurdish areas, and Somalia, not to mention the Caucasus. While Iran, the Sudan, and many other governments rejected the very principle of this new right of interference, others, such as Iraq and Turkey, were compelled to accept it; at the same time, pro-Western governments were embarrassed to acknowledge this basically Western right to intervene in their own backyards. Middle Eastern countries were ready to acknowledge the lack of support that this humanitarian “crusade” was encountering in Russia and the United States, as well as the Chinese hostility it triggered. They were relieved to see that by 1993, with the dismal record of humanitarian activism in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, such activism was abating. The decline was notably played down by the French cabinet, although it remains quite popular in public opinion.

This new pattern in European attitudes is fundamentally different from the 1960's complete identification with (and immersion in) Third World politics. The new generations of Europeans are more discerning, indeed, more vocal, in their criticism of those peoples they are helping. They are, in any case, more reluctant to identify with Third World leaders or to espouse Third Worldism in general, thus maintaining a clear distance, and reinforcing a deep feeling of estrangement between the two sides of the Mediterranean. For European youth, Europe is Europe and the Middle East a foreign area where they volunteer to suit their own ideals, not the local warlords. Governments, envying this popular infatuation with humanitarian action, desire to divert the credit for themselves. For these reasons, basically volunteer activities have been transformed into policies partly aimed at

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11. *La Croix*, April 24, 1993.

concealing European governments' inability to devise clear policy on the Middle East, to implement it, and to influence events in that part of the world.

State humanitarianism was thus an alibi for a deficient, sometimes nonexistent Middle East policy. While being self-congratulatory in their advocacy of human rights and free elections, and in their defense of endangered minorities, European governments soon discovered that they had become prisoners of their own discourse: European politicians were generally reluctant to condemn the 1992 Algerian coup d'état that deprived that country's Islamists of their electoral victory; governments toned down their support of the Kurdish cause when it appeared that Turkey could possibly be destabilized by Kurdish separatism; many Europeans became more complacent with Morocco's Hassan II despite his debatable record on human rights and his suppression of the Sahrawi movement.<sup>12</sup>

Humanitarianism has also suffered from a lack of similar enthusiasm on the other side of the Atlantic, where the difference between a classic military intervention and a humanitarian one is not readily distinguished. This different attitude stems from the vehement opposition of North American NGOs to their governments' intrusion into their domain. All these factors contributed to the gradual phasing out of humanitarianism as an explicit replacement for lack of political influence.

### VIEWS OF ISLAMISM

The widespread feeling of organic dissociation between Europe and the Middle East has been strengthened by the Europeans' anxiety—when it was not a clear hostility—toward Islamist revivalism. "Islamism" has been a central theme in the past 15 years, both in government and public opinion. Although sharing some US government views of this phenomenon,<sup>13</sup> European views tend on the whole to be somewhat more panic-driven and show much less understanding of the Islamization of the political domain.

Four factors make the European reaction to Islamism different from what they are on the other side of the Atlantic. First is the well-entrenched idea that Islamism ultimately will affect domestic politics, thanks to the presence in Europe of millions of Muslims. This idea was not brought home to the United States until the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York, but it is vivid everywhere in Europe. Immigrants, even when they have acquired permanent residency or citizenship status in Europe, remain sensitive to their countries of origin. This is especially notable when immigrants have no practical chance of acquiring the nationality of their country of residence, as is still the case in

12. See further David McDowall, *Europe and the Arabs: Discord or Symbiosis?* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1992), p. 22.

13. US government views on this issue were regularly expressed by Edward Djerejian while he was assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs. See his hearing before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on March 9, 1993, in *Department of State Dispatch*, March 15, 1993, pp. 149–52.

Germany and, to a lesser extent, in Britain. Islamist movements are active in Germany among "guest workers" of Turkish and Kurdish descent. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) tries with no real success to win the hearts of Algerians living in France. The Salman Rushdie affair galvanized the reactions of most Muslims in Britain.

For many Europeans, Islamism starts at home, hence the gradual adjustment of political establishments, after years of hesitation, toward alignment with a clearly anti-Islamist public opinion stirred by nationalist groups.<sup>14</sup> The discourse of well-established political parties, first condescending toward those actively brandishing the immigration issue, slowly came to resemble their adversaries on the far right. In Germany, for example, the Christian Democrats-Christian Socialists alliance, while being tough with neo-Nazis, amended in a restrictive manner legislation on political refugees. The French mainstream came to denounce the immigrants' "odeur" and to call for the reestablishment of identity inspections in the street. The rightist government in France has made roundups of North African Islamists a routine practice and it often appears that, on North African matters, the Ministry of Interior has much more influence than the Quai d'Orsay.

More specifically with respect to Islam, Europeans encouraged their Muslim fellow countrymen to develop a more open, secular-oriented brand of Islam. In February 1993, the French socialist government, for the first time, refused to grant visas for about 30 Egyptian and Algerian imams who in the past came every year to preach in French mosques during Ramadan. The government made a partially successful attempt to extract the Paris mosque from the Algerian government's control and to put it in the hands of local Muslims. The general view is that it is easier to deal with European Muslims when they are not under foreign Islamic influence, and that it is urgent to dissociate the domestic problems posed for secular governments by Islam from Islamic revivalism in the world as a foreign affairs issue. In fall 1993, a tough policy on FIS partisans in France signaled the end of any complacency toward Islamist ideas among Muslims resident in France. In practice, this translated into a new, more openly supportive policy of the present regime in Algeria, a policy only half-heartedly shared by France's partners in the European Union, and later partly reviewed by the French government itself.

A second factor in the European reaction to Islamism is the recurrence in Europe, or against Europeans traveling in Islamic countries, of acts of terror explicitly related to Islamic movements. Americans experienced this phenomenon during the hostage crisis in Iran and later when US hostages were taken in Beirut. For Europeans, though, feelings of vulnerability are more widespread. For a while indeed, it looked as if terrorism and Islamism were synonymous; for public

14. See McDowall, *Europe and the Arabs*, p. 26. For an excellent comparative approach on European reactions to this problem, see *Les Temps Modernes*, July-August 1991.

opinion, probably stirred by recurrent spectacular coverage in the media of "the Islamic wave," the two phenomena are still the same. Governments, however, knew better; the Yugoslav tragedy came to their rescue when it appeared that the villain in the Bosnian drama was certainly not the Muslim. The Bosnian crisis—and to a lesser extent fanatical Hinduism in the Indian subcontinent—helped greatly in reassessing simplistic ideas, conveyed in the media, of a somewhat organic link between Islam and violence. Many people were reminded that, after all, neither the Austrian archduke nor Alexander of Yugoslavia had been assassinated by Muslims. The ensuing conclusion is less a fear of Islam than of a more widespread fear of violence in the immediate vicinity of Europe.

The third factor determining European reactions to Islamism is the fear of new waves of immigrants fleeing the establishment of Islamist governments in the Middle East. This fear is based on the waves of "white Iranians" who fled their country after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took over in 1979, and of the Lebanese who fled civil strife in their country during the 1970s and 1980s. In times of unemployment, Europeans fear the Islamist's opponents or victims trying to find refuge and jobs in Europe as much as the Islamist himself.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the wary attitude toward refugees from the Balkans and the likelihood of restrictive immigration policies if the FIS takes power in Algeria. In France, the Balladur government's first legislative initiative in May 1993 was to enact more restrictive legislation according to which nobody could obtain French citizenship without asking for it. The overwhelming rightist majority refused to vote for the proposal before introducing additional restrictive amendments, making it more difficult for North Africans living in France to become Frenchmen.

Finally, and most importantly, political culture in most European countries seems less able or willing to accommodate religious politics than the United States. Notably in France, there has never been a substantial "Christian-democrat" tradition. The mere wearing of a head scarf by a Muslim teenager in a public school is perceived as a threat to republican secularist values. In May 1993, the minister of interior did not hesitate to appoint as an advisor on immigration a controversial author who had dared to question the very compatibility of Islam with French institutions and with democracy. There is a growing uneasiness with anything that mixes religion and politics. The predicament of Muslims in mixing their faith with secular politics is perceived as something that ultimately has to change for their integration into their new countries to be fully achieved.<sup>16</sup>

15. This has been clearly documented in a poll on France and Algeria in which 55 percent of those polled opposed giving political asylum to Algerians who might flee their country after an FIS takeover. *L'Express*, February 10, 1994, pp. 58–77.

16. See *Le Monde*, February 2, 1993, for quotes from a letter sent by the imam of the Paris mosque to President Mitterrand protesting what he calls "measures of marked intolerance." See also Paul Quilès, a former minister of interior, in *Le Monde*, December, 17, 1992.

The number of Muslims living in France is disputed regularly. An official report published in May 1993 by the Haut conseil à l'intégration indicates that 1.7 million Muslim foreigners now reside in France compared with some 400,000 Muslim French citizens and "400,000 to 800,000" *beurs*, young

The fourth determining factor involves Europeans' views of themselves. Beyond Islam, and specifically Islamism, what is at stake is the place of religion and of communitarian feelings in European societies. The approaches here are quite different from one country to the other. In France, secular republicanism has meant an implicit exclusion of religion from the political domain. In other countries, such as Spain and Italy, religion has been domesticated by the state rather than excluded. In Germany, citizens pay taxes to their churches, not only to their government. In the Netherlands, most education is run by confessions. It appears, therefore, that Islamism has challenged the established domestic consensus between politics and religion, which was duly noted by practicing Christians and Jews when the position of Islam in these societies became a publicly debated issue. On the whole, Germans and Scandinavians were more at ease in accommodating yet another faith in their public spheres. Southern Europeans, however, felt unable to do so without questioning their own relations to the dominant Catholic church. All this confirmed a widespread, though generally implicit, feeling that Islam, let alone Islamism, could not be viewed, at least in Europe, as a mere foreign policy issue.

#### *THE JAPANESE MODEL'S ATTRACTION*

Among young Europeans, the idea of a special relationship with the Middle East is far from being as well established as among older generations. On the contrary, young diplomats do not hesitate to compare Japanese trade successes in the Middle East to their governments' old-style emphasis on cultural links and classic diplomacy. Mercantilism, which has never been absent, recently has gained ground, first in Northern Europe and then Southern Europe as well. Country by country, the general pattern has been that the former colonial power has an enviable share of its former colony's trade. This has been the case with France in the Maghrib, Italy in Libya, and Britain in Oman and the Sudan. Japan is credited with military irrelevance, political neutrality, and a lack of historical special links to any countries in the Middle East—all factors conducive to establishing excellent trade relations there.<sup>17</sup>

The best advocate of European trade with the Middle East has been Hans-Dietrich Genscher during his long tenure as Germany's foreign minister.

Frenchmen of Muslim descent (and probably faith). While France now is trying heavy-handedly to prevent North African Islamists' attempts to mobilize Muslims in France, Germany—where some 2.5 million Muslims live—has to deal with Iranian and Turkish militancy. Iranian spiritual leader Ali Khamenehi has a "special representative" for Western Europe in the person of Hojjatolislam Ansari, who is based in Hamburg, while Turkish Islamism is mainly represented by Cemalettin Hocaoglu, head of the Islamic Center in Cologne. Many European governments are critical of Germany for its reputed complacency with Islamist activities on its territory.

17. Concerning the gulf war, for example, the difference between Japan's reaction and the dominant, highly political European reaction was all too obvious. See Masuro Tamamoto, "Trial of an Ideal: Japan's Debate over the Gulf Crisis," *World Policy Journal* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1990-91), p. 95.



Not overly burdened with political considerations nor with self-restraint in technology transfer, Genscher pursued an aggressive trade policy, cutting out a lion's share of Middle Eastern imports for his country in both Turkey and Greece, and, more interestingly, in Iran and Iraq. Germany signed an economic and technological agreement with Iraq in 1981 after that country's war with Iran had erupted. Other agreements were signed with Iran, Libya, and Syria, while these countries were the targets of US-led Western ostracism. German industrial companies have been singled out as main sources for military (and sometimes chemical weapons) programs in many Middle Eastern countries.<sup>18</sup>

Italy has followed a similar line. For most of the past 40 years, Italian industrialists have been more concerned with the Middle East than has their country's political establishment. Italian colonialism had been marked by insignificant numbers of settlers, which made decolonization easier. Fearing accusations of a relapse into fascism, however, Italy, which was refused admission to the United Nations until 1955, made a point of forgoing any attempt at building an independent political approach to the Middle East. A "Mediterranean policy" would have been too reminiscent of Mussolini's imperial dreams of the *Mare Nostrum*. After 1973, a few steps were taken (notably by Prime Minister Aldo Moro) to build up a political profile, but these attempts also were made to emulate other European countries and to facilitate Italian inroads into the then-thriving Middle Eastern markets.

While Italian politicians were reluctant about developing a high profile, Italian industrialists were extremely active. Most notable were Enrico Mattei's bold oil initiatives: signing long-term contracts to purchase oil above the market price from producers, first with Egypt, then with Iran, Libya, and Algeria. His death in 1962 was followed by a more prudent oil policy, as if the political establishment's reluctance to challenge US interests had been extended to the oil sector. Piecemeal, however, Italy has been successful in diversifying its sources of energy within the area—and in increasing dramatically its share of Middle Eastern imports thanks mainly to small-enterprise marketing skills—but not in attracting investments from the oil-producing countries. Politically, Italy has been associated with a role in producing the 1980 Venice Declaration (adopted during Italy's presidency of the European Community), and with having taken an independent line during the Tehran hostage and the *Achille Lauro* crises. The Italian government's main contribution has been to turn a deaf ear to US pressures to discourage business with so-called Arab radicals.

Technocrats in Brussels feel very much at ease with a "trade and aid" approach. In the next five years, the European Union will offer 5.5 billion European currency

18. This policy of mercantilism is far from being specifically related to the Middle East. In a November 1993 visit to China, during which contracts for \$40 billion were signed, Chancellor Helmut Kohl startled his European counterparts by inviting Chinese leaders to visit Germany, in clear opposition to EU rules passed following the Tiananmen Square incidents.

units to aid Arab countries in need, representing 22 percent of total EU foreign aid.<sup>19</sup> In the past few years, Egypt has been the primary beneficiary of European largesse, followed by Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. The emancipation of Eastern Europe has not affected these volumes substantially: between 1985 and 1991, the European bloc countries disbursed \$10.7 billion in public aid to Eastern Europe (excluding the former Soviet Union) compared to \$9.2 billion to Turkey and the Maghrib.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of trade, Eastern Europe and the Middle East (including Turkey) have been equal: about 4 percent of extra-EU trade. It is in terms of direct investments that the emancipation of Eastern Europe has negatively affected the Middle Eastern partners of the European Union. The Western Europeans invested \$5.6 billion in two years (1991–92) in the former compared to \$3.7 billion in Turkey and the Maghrib.<sup>21</sup> This discrepancy is due, among other factors, to the fact that labor in Eastern Europe is still relatively cheaper than in most Middle Eastern countries. For example, the European Union estimated that an average monthly wage for a blue collar worker was \$76 in Rumania, \$110 in Bulgaria, and \$208 in Poland; in comparison, a worker received an average monthly wage of \$135 in Morocco, \$210 in Turkey, and \$264 in Tunisia.<sup>22</sup>

Adept at the neoclassical economic approach, the European Union has believed in the virtues of foreign trade for economic development at least since 1972, when the global Mediterranean policy was adopted. This policy, contrary to the Lomé I and II Accords with Africa, did not result in a collective agreement but in a country-by-country approach. The failure of a regional accord admittedly was caused less by Europe than by the complexities and feuds in the Middle East. The Europeans were aware that a piecemeal approach would increase bidding by the various Mediterranean states, each seeking an even better deal than its neighbors. These agreements, however, were quite similar—tariff reductions on agricultural products (albeit with some quotas and seasonal limitations). The reductions were reviewed when the minimum prices system of the Common Agricultural Policy was adopted, making the system a potent protectionist obstacle vis-à-vis the Maghrib. Duty free regulations were promulgated for industrial products, with the exception of petroleum products and most textiles. New limitations were enacted to avoid mere repackaging in the area of imported parts; later limitations were put on imports of clothing, shipping, steel, synthetic fibers, machine tools, and motor cars. As for the textiles, the Europeans put pressure on many countries to unilaterally restrict their exports.

19. Bishara Khudr, *Europa wa al-watan al-Arabi* (Europe and the Arab nation) (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-Arabiyya, 1993), pp. 193 and 195; Waduda Badran, "Al-Arab wa al-majmu'a al-Europiyya" (The Arabs and the European Community), *Al-Majalla al-Arabiyya li al-dirasat al-duwaliyya* 4, nos. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 1993).

20. Commissariat Général au Plan, *L'Europe, la France et la Méditerranée: vers de nouveaux partenariats* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1993), pp. 50–1, 52.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Economist*, December 10, 1992.

Middle Eastern governments have been satisfied with their trade terms with Europe, although highly critical of the constant extension of similar terms to other countries in the world because this process has gradually eroded the preferences they enjoyed. Constraints and restraints on exports as well as on technology transfers are too numerous, however, to be left alone. The feeling the European Union can hardly dispel is one of selective protectionism. Past experience indicates that whenever a country that depends on European markets succeeds sufficiently well to become a competitor, it is liable to find supposedly free entry disappear. This experience casts doubts on the EU Mediterranean policy and the development prospects it is intended to provide.

Instead of dispelling these doubts, the European Union has confirmed them by policies adopted toward Egyptian cotton, Turkish textiles, Moroccan oranges, and gulf petrochemicals. Protectionist lobbies have become quite influential in both Brussels and Strasbourg, the seat of the European Parliament. These lobbies have succeeded despite having been weakened at the state level by national governments' overriding political considerations. Recognizing the growing influence of bureaucrats in trade policy, Turks and Israelis decided to establish their own lobbies in Brussels. Arab governments, however, have been slower in adjusting to the new Eurocratic game. Nevertheless, from Morocco to the gulf, Arabs gradually have developed a genuine interest in Brussels politics.

### *THE GULF OF ALL DREAMS*

Trade, notably with the oil-producing countries of the gulf, dominates European economic relations with the Middle East. For many years, Europeans competed in that area among themselves as much as with the United States and Japan. Each of them secured a share of that profitable market for the decade 1973 to 1982. Then, a downturn in oil revenues narrowed the market and made the competition tougher, while downstream investments in and exports of gulf petrochemicals met with hostility from European producers. Cognizant of specific gulf interests, as well as the dismal failure of the Euro-Arab dialogue, EU countries engaged in highly technical negotiations with the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.<sup>23</sup> The negotiations were launched by the Luxembourg Accord in June 1988, and have been pursued at ministerial and expert levels. Both sides are aware of many basic factors: that 90 percent of GCC exports to the European Union consist of crude oil and its derivatives, while the union alone imports some 30 percent of world oil exports.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, gulf oil exports

23. The Euro-Arab dialogue was an attempt launched after the 1973 oil crisis to discuss relevant economic aid and political issues in a joint EU-Arab League forum.

24. See Khudr, *Europa wa al-watan al-Arabi*, p. 187; Badran, "Al-Arab wa al-majmu'a al-Europiyya"; and Ian Goldin, "Agricultural Policies in OECD Countries and Their Impact on the Economics of the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula," *Journal of Economic Cooperation among Islamic Countries* 13 (January 1992).

certainly will increase in the next few years, probably in a dramatic fashion, due to the depletion of non-Middle Eastern sources and to the availability of very large reserves and the relatively low cost of production in the gulf.

On many issues, European and GCC views still are quite far apart. On the protection of the environment, for example, GCC producers feel that the proposed EU energy/carbon tax is too heavy on oil in comparison to coal. The GCC countries contend that already they are getting less than 25 percent of the final price of each barrel of oil sold in Europe. The Italian Treasury, for instance, receives \$50 billion in annual taxes on the consumption of 1.9 million barrels of oil a day; in contrast, the UAE gets some \$12 billion in annual revenues for the same amount of exports. When the CFI price of a barrel of crude oil to the European Union is \$20, the tax on petroleum products is 56 percent on average.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, a solid European petrochemical lobby, made up of 30 companies employing 600,000 people, has been actively opposing free trade agreements with the GCC and blocking the ratification of a bilateral agreement between the two entities. The lobby calls for a negotiation within the GATT framework, even though the GCC countries are not yet present at these talks. GCC officials also point to the paucity of European investments in gulf industries.

Europeans are deeply conscious of their vulnerability vis-à-vis the gulf. Their heavy reliance on gulf oil, and their large share of the area's trade are far from being matched by their political influence or their military might in that sensitive part of the world. There, more than in any other part of the Middle East, Europeans have to contend with US strategic supremacy. Expressions of their autonomy are made on specific issues, such as their attempts at normalization of their relations with Iran or arms contracts, the latter thanks to the successful obstructionist tactics of the pro-Israeli lobby in the US Congress that have led to the diversion of many an arms contract from US to European companies. Other large contracts are won in small GCC countries that resent a heavy Saudi-US hand, notably in Oman and the UAE. On the whole, however, Europeans have tended to see the gulf as a market rather than a strategic concern. They do not think—at least since Britain's withdrawal from the gulf in 1971—that they can or should challenge US supremacy there for a long time. It is also true that the gulf petromonarchies, while insisting on the diversification of their international relations, do consider the United States their paramount protector.

25. See paper submitted by the Saudi Oil Ministry to the May 1992 Kuwait Euro-Gulf meeting (no date). The European bloc admittedly had been very lax on the issue of coordination with the GCC—its main regional source of energy imports—before the famous “eco-tax” was suggested. That is why the tax was taken as a “declaration of war” by the gulf exporters. On the other hand, the European Charter on Energy is concerned mainly with the former Soviet Union, which added to GCC dissatisfaction. See Commissariat général au plan, *L'Europe, la France et la Méditerranée*, pp. 32–3.

### NORTH AFRICAN HEADACHES

Closer to southern Europe, the Maghrib has become a pressing issue. Four to five million residents in France and the Benelux countries are of Maghribi extraction<sup>26</sup>; one-third of them are citizens. Since 1986, hundreds of thousands of Tunisians and Rifi Moroccans have immigrated—many of them illegally—to Italy and Spain, respectively. Two-thirds of Maghribi trade, both in imports and exports, are with the European Union—although based on a serious asymmetry since trade with the Maghrib accounts for less than 5 percent of all EU foreign trade.<sup>27</sup> Millions of European tourists spend their holidays in North Africa, and local economies still depend on remittances from expatriates in Europe. French is the paramount *lingua franca*, and most European media are watched with a passion on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, exacerbating a mixed feeling of exclusion from Europe's riches and a fascination with its success.

Although members of a union, the Arab Maghrib Union (AMU), the Maghribi countries do not approach the European Union in a collective manner, and the Europeans respond likewise. For many years, Algeria was the crucial country in the Maghrib, thanks to its exports of oil and gas and to a very active foreign policy. Now, with the domestic turmoil in Algeria and the sanctions imposed on Libya, Morocco has asserted itself as Europe's interlocutor par excellence. This led Rabat to dream, for a while, of full membership in the European Union, something that Europeans never seriously considered. Nevertheless, Morocco received consideration for its stability and for the renowned "wisdom" of its king. It also received primacy in the possible establishment of a free trade zone, initially between the European Union and Morocco. The free trade zone would be enlarged to include Algeria and Tunisia, but Mauritania and Libya would be kept out for the foreseeable future. The entry of any Maghribi country into a free trade agreement with the European Union remains debatable in the short run because the North African governments would lose significant import fees. North African countries can benefit only if their products remain much cheaper than their European counterparts. This explains the reluctance of Tunis to negotiate, compared with Rabat's enthusiasm.

This piecemeal approach is quite different from the pre-1992 hopes for a European-AMU deal. Europeans reluctantly have come to the conclusion that the Maghrib is not making progress with its attempts at some form of institutional unification. Maghribi integration has been met in Europe with a mixture of

26. See Bruno Etienne, *La France et l'Islam* (Paris: Hachette, 1989) pp. 52–3, 80–1; Gilles Kepel, *Les Banlieues de l'Islam* (Paris: Seuil, 1987); and Rémy Leveau and Gilles Kepel, eds., *Les Musulmans dans la société française* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1988) pp. 27–38, 65–76; see also Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, "Le Fantôme de l'impossible intégration des Maghrébins," *Panoramiques*, Spring 1991, pp. 48–54.

27. Khudr, *Europa wa al-watan al-Arabi*, and Badran, "Al-Arab wa al-majmu'a al-Europiyya."

skepticism—because of the failure of past experiments—and of encouragement.<sup>28</sup> The Southern Europeans are more interested in a dialogue. The idea of a “five plus four” dialogue—Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia plus France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain—was adopted and soon expanded into a “five plus five” formula in order to include an enthusiastic Malta on the European side. As soon as the issue of Malta’s inclusion was settled, the 1988 Pan-Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, blocked any deal including Libya, and the Europeans refused to involve Mauritania because it already enjoyed preferential treatment as a signatory to the Lomé Accords.

The only real collective endeavor with some chance of immediate implementation is the Euro-Maghribi pipeline, which would increase by 25 to 30 percent Algeria’s gas export capabilities when completed in the year 2000. Spain is particularly interested in the completion of this project, which would allow it to increase its reliance on gas from 7 to 12 percent of all its energy needs. This explains why Spain is ready to offer the largest contribution to the estimated cost of \$2.5 billion. France and Portugal have been less supportive of the project.<sup>29</sup>

The view in Europe is that “something has to be done” in the Maghrib to foster political stability and economic development and, consequently, to weaken the attractiveness of Europe as a focus for new waves of immigration. What is to be done is still an open question. The case of Morocco demonstrates why it is difficult to reach a policy consensus. The fact that one-third of Moroccan exports to the European Union consists of agricultural products has triggered Southern European countries’ hostility toward the privileged treatment of Morocco.<sup>30</sup> Hence, a situation exists in which the Southern Europeans are the most enthusiastic in regard to helping the Maghrib and also the most reticent to offer it trade preferences, a paradox that has yet to be resolved.

The Maghrib also is viewed increasingly as a threat. Drugs originating in or transiting Morocco are an example. Boat people of African origin have made Tangiers their gateway to the European paradise, although the Spanish navy is now more active in shore surveillance. North Africans’ widespread popular support for Iraq during the gulf crisis led many Europeans to reassess their classical view of the Maghrib as something fundamentally different, or at least distant, from the Levant. Libya has been a permanent headache; many Maghribi leaders would not dare to condone unconditionally the West’s ostracism of the ambitious colonel who has been ruling that country since 1969. Alleged Iranian recruitment of Maghribi Islamists has added to Europeans’ feelings of threat, as

28. Maghribis tend to overestimate the competition among Western powers in their part of the world. Although France had been dominant for a century or more, contemporary France is more than willing to share the Maghribi “burden” with the other members of the European Union, and to consult with the United States on that area’s politics. Playing one Western country against the other presupposes that the area is a real stake for the competitors, but the Maghrib increasingly is seen as a burden rather than an asset.

29. *Al-Hayat*, July 15, 1993.

30. Khudr, *Europa wa al-watan al-Arabi*, p. 193.

much as the economic crisis that has been pushing abroad thousands of new expatriates every month. All these factors have resulted in the gradual establishment of entry visas in most European countries for Maghribi citizens.

On the periphery of the Middle East are four African members of the Arab League that are party to the Lomé Accords: Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, and Sudan. They benefit, therefore, from a system of nonreciprocal trade concessions and interest-free aid packages. However, these countries are part of a system that generally has been interpreted quite restrictively by the European Union, and thus their privileges have not accounted for much. For example, although relying on cotton exports, Sudan never was able to use Lomé in order to increase its share of European cotton imports—some 4 percent of the European market. Mauritania used the accords to export iron ore, which constitutes some four-fifths of its exports earnings.<sup>31</sup> Marginal to these limited, poor economies was the effect of a number of Lomé mechanisms, such as Stabex (stabilization of export earnings in the face of fluctuations in commodity prices) and Minix (intended to support mineral exports, for which the European Union obtained guarantees against non-economic risks such as nationalization). Aid also was given according to these countries, stressing food self-sufficiency, small enterprises, and rural development.

## CONCLUSION

Triggering a rather negative attitude on the other side of the Mediterranean, Europeans view the Middle East basically as a security issue for which the catchword has changed over the years from oil deliveries to terrorism and now to Islamism. The Middle East, for its part, talks to Europe in terms of economic development, fair settlement of the Palestinian issue, financial disbursements, and freedom of movement. The Euro-Arab dialogue, therefore, has been a complete failure, although the Europeans officially recognized in 1978 that the security of Europe is linked to the security of the Mediterranean region. The issue is in defining the link. Some Europeans would dispute its existence; others tend to see the link as a constraint that should be minimized as much as possible; still others recognize the link as a fact and propose to work actively for the stabilization of a volatile region, whose security is joined unavoidably to theirs.

The past few years have seen the marginalization of this third category of Europeans. Because of weariness with the area, or because of a genuine interest in what is happening elsewhere in the world, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, Europeans with a "Mediterranean vision" are becoming an endangered species. Europeans are, in fact, too busy with themselves, and, above all the

31. See Gerd Nonneman, ed., *The Middle East and Europe: An Integrated Communities Approach* (London: Federal Trust for Education and Research; Brussels: Trans-European Policy Studies Association, 1992), mimeo.

Schengen Agreements—which call for improvements in cooperation regarding security matters—as well as with closer and more pressing issues such as German reunification, EU enlargement to include new members (from Scandinavia and Central Europe, though not from the Mediterranean region), and the Balkans tragedies to be able to devise, let alone initiate, a new approach to the Middle East. When it comes to that area, European governments seem to be contenting themselves with minimal damage control, crisis management, and routine trade enhancement policies. Unless the Middle East can reimpose itself on the Europeans' political agenda, it will remain, for some time to come, a relatively low priority.

One conceptual dilemma lies behind the persistent uneasiness with this close and fascinating part of the world: The Middle East and North Africa are viewed in Europe primarily as geostrategic rather than economic or political issues, while pan-European institutions are far from being equipped, let alone ready, to devise a strategic approach. Hence, there exists a discrepancy between the calls for a pan-European policy and the fact that, despite the transformation of the European Community into a "union" in 1993, strategic issues are still handled primarily by national governments. On many "hot topics"—such as the concept of citizenship, the role of NATO versus that of the WEU, and the Eurocorps or Islamist revivalism—European governments have not yet reached a general, detailed consensus. Although political coordination is becoming more routine, cooperation on security issues is being developed, and foreign aid policy is being shifted gradually from national capitals to Brussels, Europeans still have a long way to go before convincing their Middle Eastern interlocutors, as well as their US allies, that when it comes to dealing with the Middle East, Europe is already a union.

Europe is undergoing a transitional phase that does not help in drawing any definitive conclusion about its future role as a geopolitical unit in the world system. The contrast between a real drive toward the emergence of unified institutions and policies and the European failure to act "in timely and decisive fashion" on the Balkan crisis is there to remind us that their "aspiration to act as a political entity on security matters is not matched by the authority and instruments a true sovereign power requires."<sup>32</sup> This situation allows the European Union to be much more active and influential in times and areas of peace than in periods of conflict and strife. The union's present dilemma in the Middle East is that while fairly aware of its special role in shaping the past and the future of this part of the world, Europe has been handicapped by the exclusive US role in the Arab-Israeli arena, by the undisputed US strategic supremacy in the gulf, as

32. Michael J. Brenner, "EC: Confidence Lost," *Foreign Policy*, no. 91 (Summer 1993). For equally (and overly) skeptical US views, see George Ross, "After Maastricht: Hard Choices for Europe," *World Policy Journal* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1992); Walter Goldstein, "Europe after Maastricht," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 5 (Winter 1992/93); and the five-article series in the *New York Times*, August 9–13, 1993.



well as by the new challenges posed by Islamic militancy, and by numerous yet unsettled regional disputes.

Now that the Clinton administration apparently is partly—although decisively—turning its attention to the Pacific, that the Arab-Israeli conflict is on the road toward a possible settlement, that political Islamism, though now even more worrying in Egypt and Algeria, seems more manageable elsewhere (in view of recent elections in Pakistan, Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen), and that the European Union gradually is becoming a fact, there certainly is much more room for maneuver regarding Europeans rebuilding influence in the Middle East. Until recently, this meant a high level of competition and a rather modest amount of cooperation. Will this equation be confirmed or inverted? Will the Middle Eastern arena become an example of the European Union's assertiveness as an international body, or will it be an arena for European rivalries? Answers to these basic questions clearly depend on the future of the whole European construction, something that goes far beyond the limits of the Middle East.

