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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. THE FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

#### 1. The framework

- **Defining a European line of action** on Middle East policy, which would be more than a minimum consensus, **in the framework of close cooperation** between the countries that desire it, especially **Germany, England, Italy and Spain**;
- **Associating Turkey with the definition of that policy**;
- **Making the Quartet more operational**;
- **Coordinating our actions with the new US administration better**.

#### 2. The principles

- **Make the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which remains central, the priority**;
- **Disconnect the treatment of conflicts**; refuse, for example, to make successes on the Palestinian issue depend on advances on the Iranian dossier;
- **Target diplomatic actions** on issues threatening our security, economy and bilateral relations.

### II. THE ACTIONS TO CARRY OUT

#### 1. Commit to the creation of a Palestinian State

- **The United States is pressuring Israel** to totally end settlement activity. **Europe must continue backing that policy, especially with regard to settlements in Jerusalem**, as it has until the present, but now it must act in concert with the United States to **obtain a lifting of the Gaza blockade from the government of Israel**.
- **Europe must pressure the Palestinians** into forming a **government** capable of negotiating on their behalf.
- The formation of that new government will depend less on a hypothetical reconciliation than on **new elections**, whose results will be respected by the Western powers.
- To hold those elections, it is necessary to appoint a **transitional Palestinian Authority**, which must settle the issue of the voting method.

- To facilitate the appointment of a transitional Palestinian Authority, Europe must offer its **mediation, in close connection with the United States and Turkey**, which might propose the lifting of the Gaza blockade and the resumption of European aid in exchange for an agreement on the transitional Palestinian Authority and the holding of elections. **That requires agreeing to speak to Hamas.**

## **2. Prevent Iran from obtaining the bomb and avoid bombing Iran**

- Support the US outstretched hand policy and do everything possible to **prevent**, by **negotiation**, Iran's nuclear program from becoming a **military program**.
- If talks fail, prepare **harsh economic sanctions** against the Iranian government.

## **3. Save the Yemeni State from failure to keep it from becoming Al Qaeda's next base**

- An **international conference** on Yemen's future should take place as soon as possible.

## **4. Help Iraq rebuild its State**

- Free elections are not enough for Iraq's rebirth. It also needs an **impartial State**: civil servants, judges, administrators, teachers, professors, soldiers and police officers who put the national interest above those of their communities. Europe and France can offer help if the Iraqi government really wants it.

## FOREWORD

*"If you understand anything about the Middle East, it must be because it was poorly explained to you." - Percy Kemp – Le système Boone.*

Ladies and gentlemen,

On September 22, 2008 the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces Committee entrusted two of its members, UMP senator and committee vice-president Jean François-Poncet, and Socialist senator and Senate office secretary Monique Cerisier-ben Guiga, with a Middle East fact-finding mission.

The rapporteurs made seven trips between October 2008 and June 2009, traveling to the Middle East's 15 countries, except Iran and the Sultanate of Oman. They held 357 interviews and hearings.

In Paris they held 40 hearings of experts capable of shedding light on the region's various aspects. They made six trips, in particular to the Atomic Energy Commission's Military Applications Department and EADS' *Astrium*, to ascertain how advanced Iran's nuclear program and ballistic capabilities are.

The rapporteurs decided to withhold the interview and hearing minutes in order to keep the information they gathered confidential.

They were unable to visit Iran before the June 12, 2009 elections because of the discourteous refusal of Iran's ambassador in Paris, Seyed Mehdi Miraboutalebi, to grant them visas.

No political leader in Israel agreed to see them, with the notable exception of Haim Oron, the head of Meretz, because of their meeting in Damascus with Khaled Meshaal, the political leader of Hamas.

The rapporteurs also went to Turkey, Washington, New York and Brussels to meet people most involved in Middle East affairs.

This report presents an overview of the region, with its common points and special problems, and attempts to understand all its aspects. It does not claim to examine the case of every country in proportion to its importance. The recalling of certain historical facts will be superfluous for those familiar with the region.

The purpose of this report is to help France's parliament form its own opinion on our country's foreign policy within the framework and limits of the principle of the separation of powers.



Ladies and gentlemen,

All is not quiet on the Eastern Front.

In the short term, the upheavals following Iran's latest presidential elections raise questions about the regime's legitimacy and make dialogue with that country harder. If Iran manages to acquire nuclear weapons, as the West suspects it is trying to do, a nuclear arms race throughout the region, something that Israel's nuclearization has not triggered, is to be feared.

In the long term, religion is making a comeback throughout the region. The trend reflects a hardening of identities. Behind the veil lies the quest for the self; behind the beard there is politics. The Islamic revival is most likely the latest sign of "pan-Arabism", the dream of Arab unity so flamboyantly espoused by Gamal Abdel Nasser and shattered by Israel's defeats of Egypt and its Arab allies. The Middle East rejects Western standards and seeks to reinvent its own. Attracted and at the same time under attack by the West for over a century, the Middle East perceives it as eminently unfair because of the double standard between the Arabs and Israel.

The two images—nuclearization and a return of religion—are superimposed, sketching the possible outlines of a nuclear Middle East.

Up close the picture looks more nuanced.

First, nuclear weapons are nothing new in the Middle East. Israel is reputed to have had the atomic bomb since the late 1960s. In the region's outlying parts, but in the same cultural zone, Pakistan, a Muslim country with a Sunnite majority, has had a nuclear arsenal since the late 1980s.

Second, Islam is not a monolithic block but divides as much as it unites the region's Muslims.

Iran practices Shiite Islam, which is as different from the Sunnite Islam practiced in most of the Arab countries as Protestantism can be from Catholicism. Yet it has managed to cobble together a group of Arab client states or allies, using religion, the Palestinian issue and rejection of the West to unite them. They include Syria, ruled by an Alawite minority related to Shiism; Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah; and Palestine's Hamas, even though it is Sunnite. This is the "Shiite crescent" Jordan's king mentioned some years ago. Moreover, Iran exerts a powerful influence on Iraq, where Shiites account for 60% of the population. Depending on the circumstances, wealthy, influential Qatar, home to the US Air Force's regional command and to the Middle East's most powerful mouthpiece, the Al Jazeera television network, joins that group of countries, which are often called "radical" in the West.

Meanwhile, Israel has been unable or unwilling to integrate into its regional environment. Israel's Arab neighbors perceive it as the West's enclave in a thoroughly hostile land, drawing it into a conflict that is not necessarily its own. Since 1948 Israel's successive governments have never recognized that the Palestinian identity is separate from that of the other Arab peoples and that its elites harbored dreams of national rebirth in the womb of a State as long ago as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Israel, victorious in war, has been incapable of making peace.

All the other Arab countries, which the West lumps together under the label "moderate" because they often align their diplomacy with that of the United States, lie between those two opposing poles of power. They do not form a homogeneous "camp" but are as different from one another as European countries might be and, like Europeans, look out for their own interests.

The "moderate" Arab countries' governments fear that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would strengthen the Islamic Republic's hegemonic impulses while making its territory invulnerable to attack.

The Arab peoples do not necessarily see things the same way. They despise Iran when it tries to dictate their behavior but look up to the Islamic Republic when it challenges the West and champions the Palestinian cause.

What is going to happen? Nobody can say. One thing is clear: we have reached a crossroads where anything is possible, war or peace. This is what the Greeks called *kairos*, the moment of truth, when time grows denser and everybody must choose one path and turn away from others.

The Gaza blockade started in April 2006. Almost nothing has changed since then. The status quo is unbearable. Gaza is a ticking time bomb.

What is more, seldom have so many decisive elections taken place in such a short period of time in a region where governments use the next vote, at home or next door, as a pretext to justify their inaction.

A new prime minister, backed by a majority including far-right elements, has governed Israel since February 2009.

Saad Hariri, the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's son, led the pro-Western 14 March Alliance to victory in Lebanon's June 7, 2009 legislative elections but has struggled to form a government.

Iranians went to the polls on June 12, 2009. but observers have cast doubt on the results. Ahmadinejad is still president but his power has been strongly challenged.

Iraq will hold legislative elections at the end of the year. Will Nouri al-Maliki, the Shiite prime minister, stay in power and pursue his national unity policy despite the US forces' pullout to which he is so eagerly looking forward?

Above all, the United States elected a new president. Barack Obama. He still has a wide margin of maneuver. He has decided that America should resume playing a role in settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and taken the time to define his policy in the region.

A new game is under way and the first hands are being played in Israel and Iran.

The players are the 16 countries between Iran and Egypt east and west and Syria and Yemen north to south. The region's specificity lies in the role the Western powers have always played there. It would be impossible to describe events in the Middle East without considering what Henry Laurens calls "the perverse game of [outside] meddling and interference".

The United States is undoubtedly the most influential partner. The whole region passionately followed the last presidential election. That is understandable: when a wing flutters in Washington it can unleash a storm in Israel, Palestine or Iraq. Is the United States' hyper-presence part of the problem or the solution? In any case nothing can happen unless it plays an integral part. All roads to the Middle East pass through Washington.

For 15 years Turkey, which has kept a very low profile in the region since the end of the Ottoman Empire, has been using skillful diplomacy to be on good terms with everybody. It pursues a strategic partnership with Israel while participating in military maneuvers with Syria, speaks to Hamas without fear of ostracism, acts as a mediator in Iraqi Kurdistan and maintains good ties with Iran.

The Soviet Union's imprint has not completely faded. It has left traces of Stalinism in Egypt's and Syria's political systems and armed forces, but Russia does not play a central role in the region.

China is emerging as a player because of trade and energy, offering the region an Asian horizon. India and Pakistan cannot ignore the fate of their millions of citizens working in the Gulf.

Lastly, what is Europe's Middle East policy? What are France and England, the last imperial powers to have occupied the region, doing? They bear the historical responsibility of drawing its borders without consulting its peoples. But do they still have a policy?

What does the game being played in the Middle East have to do with Europe? Of course, there are trade and energy interests. Europe relies on the Middle East for its oil and gas imports and exports a significant amount of goods and services to the region. France has very strong historical ties with Lebanon, Syria and Egypt as well as strategic new cultural, economic and military links with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Security is another issue. Terrorism worries Europeans, Americans and the Middle East's governments. Young Europeans are enrolling in madrasas in Yemen or elsewhere while others have died in terrorist attacks in Cairo, London and Madrid.

But there is more. Several million Muslims and Jews live together in Europe. Their common destiny goes beyond economic and security interests. It unites us more than it divides us. It is made up of "pasts", including some that do not easily pass away, but above all of a future that directly affects the construction of European identity, especially in France.

How is the game moving forward and what is at stake? What are the common points—for they exist—upon which the region's political identity is based and that makes an overview possible?

The Palestinian and Iranian issues dominate the region's political scene because of their age and seriousness. How must they be treated?

What are the weak points and the areas where a consolidation process is at work? What has France's policy been until now and how has Europe asserted itself?

In conclusion, what course should French and European diplomacy take if it finally becomes a reality after the Treaty of Lisbon is ratified?

Those are the questions we have asked ourselves.

## The Middle East



## The countries of the Middle East

### Statistical information

	Population (millions) 2007(1)	Fertility rate (number of children per woman) 2005(2)	GDP (per inhabitant in dollars) 2005(3)	Growth rate 2007 (4)	IDH 2005(5)	Life expectancy (years) 2005 (6)
Egypt	75.5	3.2	1,207	7.1%	0.708	70.7
Iran	71.0	2.1	2,781	6.0%	0.759	70.2
Iraq	28.0	4.3	1,938	5.0%	n.d.	57.7
Saudi Arabia	24.2	3.8	13,399	3.5%	0.812	72.2
Yemen	22.4	6.0	718	2.8%	0.508	61.5
Syria	19.9	3.5	1,382	3.9%	0.724	73.6
Israel	7.2	2.9	17,828	5.3%	0.932	80.3
Jordan	5.7	3.5	2,323	5.7%	0.773	71.9
United Arab Emirates	4.4	2.5	28,612	6.3%	0.868	78.3
Lebanon	4.1	2.3	6,135	6.0%	0.772	71.5
Palestine (territories)	3.8	5.6	1,107	0.8%	0.731	72.9
Kuwait	2.7	2.3	31,861	4.7%	0.891	77.3
Oman	2.6	3.7	9,584	6.0%	0.814	75.0
Qatar	0.8	2.9	52,240	14.8%	0.875	75.0
Bahrain	0.7	2.5	17,773	6.8%	0.866	75.2
For memory: France:	61.7	1.9	34,936	1.9%	0.952	80.2

<sup>[1]</sup> Source : WTO report, 2008, on 2007 data

<sup>[2]</sup> Source : UNDP report, 2007/2008, on 2005 data (except. Iraq, source CNUCED)

<sup>[3]</sup> Source : UNDP report, 2007/2008, on 2005 data

<sup>[4]</sup> Source : Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>[5]</sup> Source : UNDP report, 2007/2008, on 2005 data

<sup>[6]</sup> Source : UNDP report, 2007/2008, on 2005 data

## CHAPTER I - OVERVIEW

To paraphrase Carl Poirier quoted by Pascal Ménoret<sup>1</sup>, the Middle East is located "an imagination away". The author was referring to Saudi Arabia but his phrase sheds light on how Americans and Europeans perceive all the countries in that part of the world.

What accounts for our difficulty in understanding the region's societies, our lack of empathy, ethnocentric rejection of their cultures, all-too-frequent indifference to their misfortunes, quiet acceptance of their repression by predatory republican or monarchical dictatorships and resulting lag in human development?

The first hypothesis is our forgetfulness about the nature of relations between Europe (and then the United States) and the Middle East in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. We have forgotten that "colonization and imperialism have brutalized societies"<sup>2</sup>: the Egyptian campaign, the French and English intervention to weaken the Ottoman Empire and the dismantling of that empire in the 1920s, the drawing of arbitrary borders disregarding the will of the peoples concerned—Iraq, Syria separated from Lebanon, Jordan as a consolation prize for the Hashemites, Arabia offered to the Saud family—and all of those countries in subjugated positions as official (Iraq-Syria) or unofficial (Jordan-Arabia) protectorates. We have forgotten gunboat diplomacy and yet it has never ended. The Iraq war is the latest episode. We have lost sight of a past that is still a burning memory in the Middle East and, as Henry Laurens says, resurges as soon as governments and non-governmental groups instrumentalize it to shore up public opinion.

Another hypothesis is the lack of knowledge about the realities of Middle East societies. With the exception of Yemen, the region's peoples have never been younger and more literate nor their elites so highly skilled. Never have so many women been so educated and had access to universities and prestigious careers—a source of power on the Arabian Peninsula as well as in Egypt.

A third hypothesis involves our essentialist conception of Islam and the Middle East, leading us to mistakenly reduce that religion to certain archaic practices and that part of the world to its religious dimension. That is explained by the Arab regimes' nearly systematic manipulation of religion and the presence of extremists. But we should be able to make distinctions. Islam cannot be reduced to the Taliban or Iran's mullahs any more than Catholicism

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<sup>1</sup> Pascal Ménoret – L'énigme saoudienne – *La Découverte* 2003

<sup>2</sup> Henry Laurens - L'Orient arabe à l'heure américaine - *Pluriel*

can be confused with the Inquisition, Protestantism with pastors sentencing "witches" to burning at the stake in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or today's creationists. It is a source of spiritual elevation for some, a dreadful excuse for the cruelest wars for others. Like every religion, Islam is what people make of it.

In the West, experts on the region are familiar with the traits common to the Middle East countries that we are about to recall but remain unknown to the general public. How can we comprehend the crises making the top stories on daily newscasts for a few bloody seconds without referring to that background?

Pictures on our TV screens strengthen Western stereotypes of backwardness, violence and irreducible strangeness. Before describing the Middle East's evolution, let us recall some sociological, historical and economic facts with the aim of making the Orient, which seems so complicated to us because it is poorly known, more intelligible to Western eyes.

## **I. FAST-CHANGING SOCIETIES**

### ***A. THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION HAS STARTED EVERYWHERE AND ENDED NOWHERE***

#### **1. The demographic transition in the Middle East**

The term "demographic transition" refers to a stage in a society's life when couples start controlling births.<sup>1</sup>

The Middle East has entered that phase. The fertility rate fell from 6.8 children per woman in 1975 to 3.7 in 2005, heralding a tectonic shift in the traditional balance of relationships to authority in civil and political society. The turning point comes when the first generation with a literate majority reaches adulthood. That is happening in the Middle East. Birth control is spreading throughout society, causing disorientation and often weakening political authority. The period of literacy and contraception often coincides with revolution.

#### **2. Social upheavals**

In general, the more powerful family traditions are, the stronger the social upheavals. The Middle East is no exception. The patriarchal family is more an expression of solidarity between brothers and sisters and male and female cousins than of the dictatorship of a *pater familias*. Literacy, the rural exodus and birth control have thrust individuals into a new, modern

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<sup>1</sup> See Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd – Le rendez-vous des civilisations – Seuil 2007



framework that is more conducive to personal fulfillment but so destabilizing it triggers nostalgia. Obsession with the status of women and the conspicuousness of once-private religious practices are symptoms of that disorientation. In the Middle East the patriarchal family offers individuals strong protection in exchange for accepting its constraints. The elimination of illiteracy, the rural exodus and birth control have destroyed those safeguards and the patriarchy at the same time, hence the rise of anxiety.

### **3. Putting things into perspective**

Modernization, literacy and changes in sexual behavior have rocked the traditional family, shaken relationships with authority and threatened male domination. Those revolutionary patterns, typical in periods of demographic transition, are not specific to the Middle East. In 1649 the Puritan Revolution that led to the 1689 Bill of Rights broke out in England just after it crossed the threshold of 50% literacy. In 1730s France, where most men between the ages of 20 and 24 could read and write and fertility started dropping, an ideological and political crisis began that spawned the 1789 Revolution.

#### ***B. WOMEN BETWEEN ASCENSION AND CONSERVATISM***

##### **1. Contradictory trends**

Contradictory trends determine the situation of women in the Middle East. Some point to ascension and emancipation. The part women played in Iran's presidential election is one example but there are others, such as the increase in the number of businesswomen in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Other indicators suggest a regression in the status of women, marked by conservative precepts that they subconsciously pass on to future generations. It is hard to say whether the Middle East is moving towards more or less freedom for women.

##### **2. The schooling of girls**

The transformation of the status of women has led to an increase in the number of girls in school, which has risen to an average of 50% of the female population. With the growth of universities and unprecedented enrollment in institutions of higher learning, the level of women's professional skills has considerably risen in the past three decades and the region underwent the world's fastest growth in female participation in economic activities between 1990 and 2003 (19% compared to 3% globally). Schools and universities for girls and young women, as well as legislative strides, such as the right to vote and run for office (Oman and Qatar in 2003, Kuwait in 2005) have changed everything for women under 50.

The qualitative and quantitative metamorphosis of the role of women has also triggered a widespread reaction: the return of conservative ideas that try to limit women to being "guardians of tradition"<sup>1</sup>.

Oddly, the return of the Muslim veil shows that the most conservative social circles agree to let their wives and daughters study, have a career and leave the home. The veil and *abaya*, which women in the modern bourgeoisie consider a step backwards, are tools of liberation for most of the rest.

### **3. Feminism and salafism**

The feminist movement has coincided with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the spread of salafism (from salaf: ancestor). Women from society's lower ranks joined Islamist movements more easily because, unlike their parents, they learned how to read the Koran and their intellectual level predisposed them to a literal interpretation of the text. That trend affects both women and men. Like many of their Western counterparts, Muslim women still pass on by their example the values of male hegemony that work against them and their daughters.

The status of women, between ascension and conservatism, seems to be the indicator of how far changing societies have come.

## **II. THE RETURN OF RELIGION: A HARDENING IDENTITY**

### ***A. THE REJECTION OF WESTERN NORMS***

Islam has once again become the dominant social norm of Middle East societies long tempted by Occidentalism. That is nothing new but dates back to the defeat of Arab nationalism in the 1967 Six Day War. The hallmarks of "re-Islamization" include the adoption of a dress code (the veil for women) and Islamic behavior intended to make one more respectable. Believers pray more conspicuously and everybody fasts during Ramadan or pretends to. All that has to do with the rejection of Western ways and a hardening of Muslim identity<sup>2</sup>.

Religious beliefs, passed down from one generation to the next, fade away more slowly than ideologies. Religion comforts all the generations Israel defeated and humiliated by offering believers an identity to cling to.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hélé Béji's remarkable book *Une force qui demeure, Arléa, 2006*.

<sup>2</sup> See Amin Maalouf – *Les identités meurtrières – Grasset 1998*.

Islam, the last sanctuary of their self-esteem, has gradually restored Muslims' dignity. Former nationalists have used religion to channel young people's anger and restore their pride<sup>1</sup>.

### ***B. THREE GENERATIONS OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM***

Modern Islamic fundamentalism has gone through three successive generations. The first, that of resistance to the colonial presence, has been replaced by the generation of resistance to the nationalist elites that took power after independence. The third generation, that of Al Qaeda, has set itself apart from the Islamic nationalism specific to occupied territories or countries at war with the West: Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and of course Palestine<sup>2</sup>.

### ***C. JIHADISM AND SALAFISM***

Some members of the latest generation have opted for a radical interpretation and a warlike use of Muslim texts against the West in general, the United States and Israel in particular. They advocate a fight to the death not only against Christians and Jews, but also the "secular" elites in power in Muslim countries. The movement sets itself apart from the Muslim Brotherhood, which it accuses of making concessions intolerable to the primacy of the divine norm by accepting the principles of democracy.

### ***D. TOWARDS A MUSLIM MODERNITY?***

The hardening of identity is not necessarily a brake on modernization. A Muslim can be a doctor or an engineer and a fervent believer at the same time. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Pascal was a great mathematician, a mystic and a militant Jansenist. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan is a characteristic example. In a few years the movement has shifted away from the goal of a deep transformation society to a more conventional political struggle. It has officially abandoned the aim of setting up a theocratic State and the new guard proclaims its respect for popular sovereignty, democratic elections and minorities' rights. A loose conglomeration, the movement started in Egypt and has spread in various forms to many Middle East States, including Palestine and Jordan, where, as in Egypt, it campaigns for constitutional reforms, the independence of parliament, abolition of elections on a majority basis, liberal economic reforms and freedom of expression.

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<sup>1</sup> See Amin Maalouf - *Le dérèglement du monde* – Grasset 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See Jean-Pierre Filiu's very enlightening book *Les frontières du Jihad*. Fayard 2006.

Is the Muslim Brotherhood a kind of Islamic "Christian democracy"? Are democratic demands compatible with its moralizing, preaching, calling people to religious practice, observing Islamic customs and tradition and criticizing broadcasts or publications considered immoral? By joining such movements, can the Middle East's peoples find an escape valve for their frustrations and, through a known dialectical phenomenon, embrace an original modernity rooted in their history?

### **III. THE GAP BETWEEN PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTS**

When a crowd pulled down the statue of Saddam Hussein, the quintessential Arab tyrant, in downtown Baghdad in April 2003, hopes were running high that the Arab world was finally on the road to democracy. Most regimes displayed a desire for reform, held elections and made conciliatory gestures towards the opposition, but none can really be called democratic. Democracy is not just an operational method limited to elections. It is also a set of values based on human rights guaranteed by an impartial State and the rule of law.

#### ***A. THE REGION'S DIVERSE POLITICAL PICTURE***

The region's political picture is actually fairly diversified. Even among the monarchies, there is a difference between those that ban all political activities or refuse to hold elections and those that have a veritable political arena and elected parliaments. Among the republics, there are those that are or aspire to become hereditary, those that totally rule out elections and political parties and those that grant the press and opposition a tightly muzzled freedom of expression.

#### ***B. DEMOCRACIES IN NAME ONLY***

Instead of becoming a firmly established institution, democracy in the Middle East is mostly a sham. Elections, long reduced to being mere plebiscites, offer a particularly interesting illustration. In 2005 a wave of them took place in Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where President Mubarak, in power since 1981, held the first apparently free and fair presidential elections under pressure from the United States. Then legislative elections made the Muslim Brotherhood the leading opposition force in a powerless parliament. But those elections are seldom pluralistic and competitive. They have been administered by regimes bent on controlling the results through manipulating voting laws, banning opposition parties and combining fraud with repression.

### ***C. THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL LEGITIMACY***

The many causes mainly involve some governments' lack of legitimacy, which allows people to accept an institution's authority without excessive constraint. However, most of the regimes in the Arab Orient are undergoing an acute crisis of legitimacy. Few have genuine historical or democratic legitimacy. Peoples submit to their power but hate them. All that is left are local solidarity networks: religious, tribal, clan, etc. Only "patriotic" legitimacy, granted to those who fight the foes of the (Arab) Nation, thereby restoring its dignity, seems to have any currency. But no head of State since Nasser has met the people's expectations in that regard<sup>1</sup>.

## **IV. A DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WEST**

The Arab States' resentment of Western countries has deep roots in the colonial period but grew with the creation of the State of Israel.

Their inability to militarily defeat Israel, combined with the separate peace treaties signed by that country with Egypt and Jordan, which allows it to dictate its terms to all the other parties, starting with the Palestinians, explains why the Arab-Israeli conflict has dragged on for 60 years. Arab peoples and governments have blamed, not wrongly, the Western powers. But that self-justifying discourse eventually reached its limits and the inability to win a war or make peace has been a breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalist movements, which have re-appropriated the Arab nationalist discourse and replaced it with a religious one. That was made all the easier when religious references such as "crusade" and "axis of evil" peppered the speeches of the main Western power's leader, George W. Bush.

### ***A. REJECTION OF THE UNITED STATES***

Throughout the Middle East we encountered a blatant rejection of America's power, image and values, not only in the "Arab street" but also among the governing elites of the United States' most loyal allies.

Public opinion in all the Arab and Muslim countries denounce the Bush administration's moralizing policy, stigmatization of Arab regimes as "Islamist-terrorist", invasion of Iraq and unshakeable support for Israel's settlement policy. All Arab and Muslim rulers have had to take that into account.

Yes as soon as a threat looms those same rulers are the first to ask the United States to play the part of sponsor and protector. That is the perverse

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<sup>1</sup> Voir Amin Maalouf – *Le dérèglement du monde* – Grasset 2009

game of meddling and interference Henry Laurens denounced. Who do they call upon to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? The United States. Who do they ask to pressure Iran? The United States. The Americans are requested to become involved, but criticized for their interfering as soon as they do. The Arab States have a schizophrenic relationship with the United States, and it is to escape from that oppressive tête-à-tête that they have asked Europe to increase its presence.

### ***B. HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF EUROPE***

The Arab States praise Europe for its light-handed approach, willingness to dialogue and emphasis on values, compared to the United States, which puts too much importance on a procedural definition of democracy. They like Europeans for their culture and historical ties with the region. France is especially appreciated for its long-standing sensitivity to Arab demands.

But let there be no mistake. If the Arab elites want more Europe, it is primarily because they want less America. If they praise European soft power, it is because they have had enough of the previous administration's unilateralism. If President Obama shows more sensitivity, culture and open-mindedness, as he did with remarkable talent in Cairo, the Arab elites will soon be knocking on Washington's door again. But mistrust of the West and the desire to preserve a threatened identity will continue strewing stumbling blocks on the road to better relations.

## **V. ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS**

### ***A. BOUNTIFUL ENERGY RESOURCES BUT NOT ENOUGH WATER***

#### **1. Energy resources**

In 2006 the Middle East had the most fossil fuel reserves on the planet by far. The five Persian Gulf OPEC countries possessed two-thirds of the oil reserves and supplied 30% of all the raw crude consumed, playing a fundamental role in meeting the world's energy needs.

The Middle East pumps out 25 million barrels of oil every day. Nearly 20 million are exported, almost half from Saudi Arabia, the world's leading crude producer. Most find their way to the OECD countries. The United States and United Kingdom imported 2.5 million barrels a day in 2005: 70% from Saudi Arabia, 10% from Iraq, 10% from Kuwait and the rest from

Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. In Europe, 25% of imports came from Iran.

The Middle East also has extensive natural gas reserves estimated in 2006 at 73 billion cubic meters. The region is bound to play a key part on the gas market because it possesses 41% of the planet's reserves. Iran and Qatar rank second and third in the world, respectively, and together account for 30% of global reserves. With growing electricity needs in countries such as China, and the natural gas industry's brisk growth, the region is likely to find many outlets for this resource in the coming years.

Asia is becoming the Middle East's main customer. In a few years, that will change the West's relative political clout in that part of the world.

## **2. The water shortage**

As a vital, and exhaustible, natural resource, water is at the heart of the Middle East's problems. The amount of available water is expected to fall by 80%, from 3,400m<sup>3</sup> per inhabitant per year in 1960 to 600m<sup>3</sup> in 2025, whereas the minimum necessary for survival is estimated at 2,000m<sup>3</sup>. Inefficient water management and rundown facilities contribute to waste, estimated at 40% to 50% in cities. The sometimes reckless use of water, especially in the Gulf States, which consumes as much as the United States does, as well as the appropriation of the resource by some States at the expense of others also account for the Middle East's water shortage.

Water has become a coveted resource and a source of conflicts. Israel controls the resources in the Litani River region, which provides Lebanon with 25% of its supplies, as well as the Jordan. Israel also controls most of the ground water in the Palestinian territories and all of it in the Gaza Strip, allowing it to shut the tap on and off at will. Water is an integral part of Israeli policy in the Palestinian territories. The biggest settlements are on the region's main aquifers, whose dwindling supplies also pose a critical problem in Jordan. Lastly, dams on the Tigris, Euphrates and their tributaries built by Iran, Syria and especially Turkey have dried up the Shatt al-Arab, which is a crucial problem for Iraq.

The lack and poor management of fresh water have led Israel and the Gulf States to turn to desalinization. The Middle East accounts for half the world's output of fresh water from desalinization, or 11 million cubic meters a day. Desalinization helps countries become self-sufficient and meet steadily rising demand but has harmful effects on water conservation and the environment.

Desalinization plants require tremendous amounts of energy, most of which is supplied by fossil fuels. That waste of energy makes it necessary to develop nuclear power in the region. What is more, desalinization produces brine, which is discharged into the sea or rivers, increasing their salt content.

That raises the water temperature, accelerating its evaporation, and disrupts aquatic ecosystems. To make matters worse, the intensive use of chlorine necessary to maintain the facilities (22 metric tons a day in the Gulf) and discharges of copper due to pipe wear have dramatic consequences on the environment of a region affected by global warming. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century conflicts in the Middle East may have been over oil. In the 21<sup>st</sup> they will be about water.

### ***B. THE DIFFERENTIATED IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS***

The aim here is not to draw an overall picture of the region's economic situation, but two observations must be made.

First, the impact of the economic crisis depends on each country's starting situation. Those that had built up substantial financial reserves, such as Saudi Arabia or the Gulf States, have seen their assets' value melt but their overall outlook is still good, although some, such as Dubai, will find it hard to pay the bill for excessive real estate speculation.

Three countries may suffer more than others, threatening their domestic stability.

The first is Iran, whose economy has suffered for several years from United Nations Security Council sanctions and entered the crisis in a position of structural weakness. Falling oil prices have certainly increased tensions, which may have helped to foster the discontent expressed during last June's demonstrations.

The second country that has been particularly hard hit by the crisis is Egypt, whose economy is based on three sources of livelihood: oil, Suez Canal revenues and tourism. The downturn has affected all three at the same time and may spark social unrest. According to information supplied to the mission, exports and tourism revenues are expected to fall by 40%, canal revenues by 25%. The growth rate is likely to drop from 7% in 2008 to 4% or even 2% in 2009.

The third country that will probably suffer from the economic crisis is Yemen, because gas is one of its only resources.

The second observation has to do with the economic integration promoted by the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is flawed and spotty because it leaves out Yemen and Iraq and does not yet include a common currency. Nevertheless, it remains one of the best hopes for the region's economic development and peaceful unification.



## VI. THE POLITICAL RISE OF SHIISM

The split between Islam's Shiites and Sunnis dates back to the Prophet's succession. When Mohammed died in Medina in 632 he left no descendants or instructions, opening the way for a lasting conflict between two groups. Sunni Muslims refer to the "tradition" (sunna) the prophet established. They say the "successor" (caliph) must be chosen for his moral, religious and political qualities. Shiites argue that only a member of the prophet's family can guide the Muslim community. They were "partisans" (shiites) of Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, Ali. The Kharidjites, literally "those who left" (after the first battle between Shiites and Sunnis at Siffin in 657), belong to neither camp and form an extremely small group<sup>1 2</sup>.

The exact figures are hard to come by, but there is no doubt that Sunni Muslims are demographically the majority by far (87%), accounting for 1.13 billion of the world's estimated 1.3 believers, of whom just 20% live in the Arab world.

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<sup>1</sup> See François Thual, *Géopolitique du Chiisme – Arléa 1995 – Olivier Roy : le croissant et le chaos - Hachette 2007 p. 127 and following as well as an interview with the author in Moyen-Orient n° 1 August-September 2009 p. 6.*

<sup>2</sup> *The first four caliphs after Mohammed (the "rightly-guided caliphs") were his brother-in-law Abû Bakr (632-634); Omar ibn al-Khattab (634-644), one of his most faithful lieutenants; Uthman ben Affan (644-656); and Ali Ibn Abi Talib (656-661), the prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Their succession is not hereditary and they are elected.*

*For the majority duodecimal Shiites, the line of succession after Mohammed and his daughter Fatima had 12 "imams" from the family of Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Muhammad Al-Mahdi, better known as the hidden imam because he is said not to have died but to have "hidden" himself in 868 and his return will signal the end of days. Each imam is the son of the previous one (except the third, Hussayn, who was the brother of the second, Hasan, both of whom were sons of Ali). The Ismailian Shiites of India and Central Asia recognize just seven imams and the Zaydites of Yemen, five. The Alevis of Turkey, Alawites of Syria and Druses of Lebanon, Israel and Syria belong to the Shiite community but have different beliefs and practices. The prophet's and spiritual guides' line of imam-successors thus stops in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. These imams are not the same as the simple imams who lead prayers in Sunni Islam and, like Protestant pastors, are appointed by the community of believers. Duodecimal Shiites call these prayer leaders, who belong to a clergy, mullahs or ayatollahs.*

*Sunni Muslims do not recognize imams but caliphs, who are also hereditary. Several caliphates have existed since the founding of Islam following conflicts between the various pretenders to the title of Mohammed's successor after the first four caliphates. The most important were the Omeyyades of Damascus (661-750), Abbassides (750-1517) and Ottomans (1517-1924). Mustafa Kamal Atatürk officially abolished the institution of the caliphate in 1924, two years after the sultanate. The last and 101<sup>st</sup> caliph after Abû Bakr was called Abdul Mejjid. He died in Paris in 1944 and was buried in Medina.*

Together the various Shiite communities total just 160 million believers, or slightly fewer than 12% of Muslims. The Kharidjites account for less than one percent of Muslims and live in Oman, Djerba and Zanzibar.

The rivalry between Shiites and Sunnis runs through all the Middle East countries but has not been a constant in the region's history. The rift becomes politically important only when governments exploit it, which happened in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Iran's Safavid dynasty emphasized the Shiite identity to resist the Ottomans and vice versa. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the trend in Muslim law schools was to recognize Shiism as one doctrinal school among others.

That changed with Iran's Islamic Revolution and the US invasion of Iraq.

In the early 1980s Ayatollah Khomeini's desire to export the essentially anti-Western and vaguely Third-World Islamic revolution led the regime to gloss over its Shiite specificity and stress its Muslim identity.

In the Iraq War confessional identity was stressed as a component of Iraqi nationalism and exalted to fuel the soldiers' enthusiasm.

Clashes between Shiites and Sunnis broke out in 1980s Pakistan, Saudi Arabia's Hassa and Qatif regions in late 1979 and early 1980, and in Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon. Fighting has occurred nearly everywhere that Shiites and Sunnis live together.

It is symptomatic that, outside Pakistan, those clashes broke out in the Persian Gulf, which has the Middle East's main oilfields and a Shiite-dominated "religious geography"<sup>1</sup>.

Arab Shiites have always been a socially and politically excluded minority. Shiite Islam's strong comeback in Iran kindled those populations' aspirations and alarmed Sunni governments.

In the 20 years between 1984 and 2004 the Shiite-Sunni rift became a key feature of the Muslim world from the Mediterranean to the Indus. However, the "Shiite renewal"<sup>2</sup> that accompanied Iran's Islamic Revolution failed to catch on except in Iraq, where Shiites acceded to power, but for other reasons.

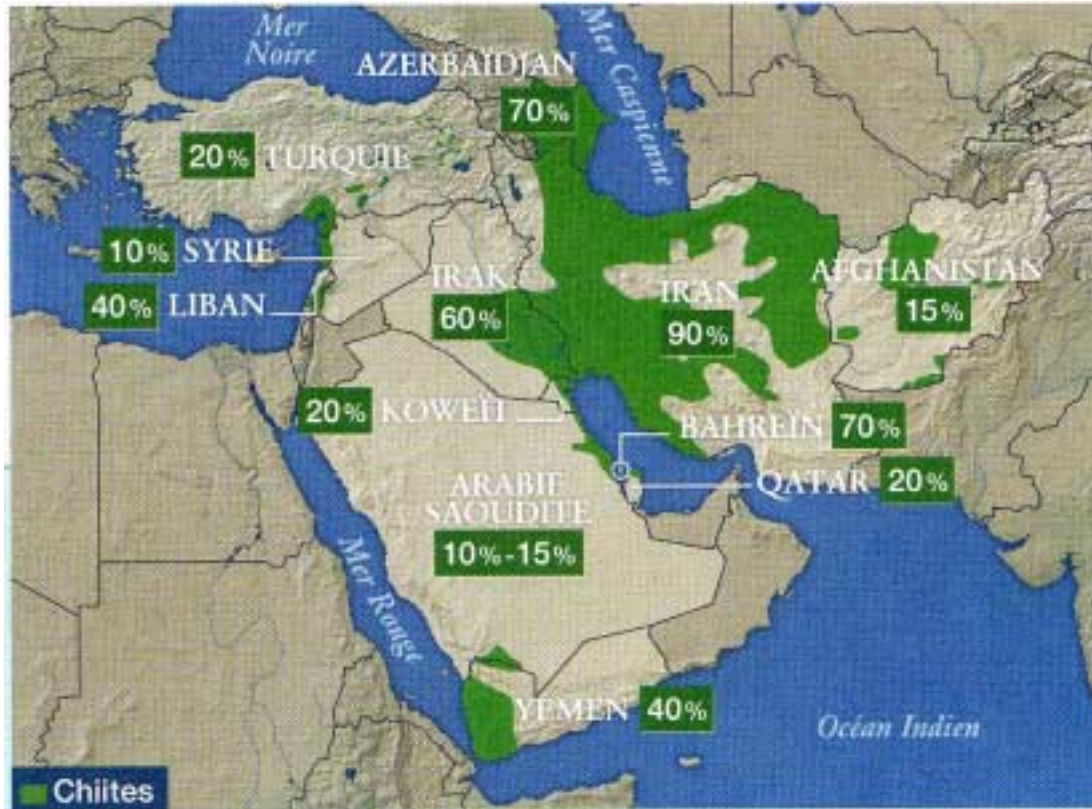
Jordan's King Abdallah II denounced the threat of the "Shiite crescent" in a December 2004 *Washington Post* interview. The fact that he is not a demagogue but a quiet, levelheaded leader made his comments all the more forceful.

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<sup>1</sup> *François Thual, op. cit. p. 101*

<sup>2</sup> *See Vali Nasr Le renouveau chiite - Demopolis 2008*

Like Olivier Roy, it might be safe to say that "the Shiite question is becoming dominant" and that Arab nationalism, unsuccessful in defending the Palestinian cause, is turning into a defense of Sunnism against Shiism, heralding a "tectonic shift" in the "greater Middle East"<sup>1</sup>.



Source: "Le dessous des cartes – Atlas d'un monde qui change – Tallandier 2009 – Jean-Christophe Victor – Virginie Raison – Frank Tétart

<sup>1</sup> The "greater Middle East" is a term President George W. Bush and his administration used to indicate an area stretching from North Africa to Mauritania, Pakistan and Afghanistan, including Turkey, the Mashrek and the whole Arabian peninsula.



## **CHAPTER II - A TWO-PRONGED CHALLENGE**

Two problems dominate the Middle East and pose hard challenges for the West. The first is ensuring the Palestinian people's future without compromising Israel's existence. The second is convincing Iran to stop its nuclear program and preventing the nuclearization of Middle East without resorting to force. Yesterday, solving those two problems seemed out of reach. Today, the election of a new president of the United States has changed the outlook.

### **I. PEACE AND SECURITY FOR ALL: CREATING A PALESTINIAN STATE**

It is nearly impossible to travel anywhere in the Middle East without hearing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Solving it is vitally important for all the region's countries, including Syria, whose Golan Heights are still occupied; Lebanon, which has over 400,000 Palestinian refugees on its soil; and Egypt, whose diplomats have made considerable efforts to promote a peaceful settlement. More generally, the conflict is part of everyday Arab political discourse, from heads of State to senior managers or shopkeepers.

The conflict is at the heart of East-West relations and therefore directly affects us. The overwhelming majority of Muslims believes that the West does not respect Islam, pointing as proof to "the unjust double standard" that accepts Israel's atomic bomb but rejects Iran's and condemns Hamas's rocket attacks but not the Gaza blockade that caused them.

Yet nobody has ever been able to break the deadlock: neither US President Bill Clinton, who got Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin to shake hands on the White House lawn in 1993, nor the members of the "Quartet" (the United Nations, European Union, United States and Russia), which adopted the "roadmap" in 2003 in order to settle the conflict step-by-step based on a two-state solution.

Each time, the same issues—the status of Jerusalem, fate of Palestinian refugees and growth of Israeli settlements—accompanied by terrorist attacks that bloodied the region for 15 years—the assassination of Rabin, tragedy of Gaza and second Intifada—shattered hopes for peace.

Yet nobody doubts that peace is necessary for better relations between the West and the Arab world. But matters more: "**security**", which the Israelis want, or "**justice**", which the Palestinians demand?

Those are the terms in which the June 13, 1980 Venice Declaration spelled out the issue, asserting that "the time has come to promote the

recognition and implementation of the two principles universally accepted by the international community: the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

Thirty years later the situation has not only remained unchanged but regressed. Not only has no peace treaty been signed, but there are no longer even any partners to negotiate one. The Palestinian movement has split into two hostile entities incapable of naming a single interlocutor. The current Israeli government only half-heartedly accepts the idea of a Palestinian State, even if it were reduced to an Israeli protectorate. How can the deadlock be broken?

### **A 20-year "peace process"**

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process began in 1991, in the aftermath of the Gulf War, with the Madrid conference, when Israel agreed to recognize the PLO as a negotiating partner. The process groups together all the diplomatic agreements concluded since then to find a solution to the conflict.

**The Oslo accords**, which Yasser Arafat and Itzhak Rabin sign in Washington in the presence of Bill Clinton on **September 13, 1993**, calls for the mutual recognition of the PLO and Israel and temporary five-year Palestinian autonomy. The Oslo process, which is completed in 1994, gives the new Palestinian National Authority limited powers. The 1995 Oslo II accords divides the West Bank into three zones based on how much control the PA is granted over each one.

**From July 11 to 25, 2000 the Camp David summit** brings Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat together in the presence of Bill Clinton. The parties are unable to find a compromise because they fail to agree on three points—the size of territorial concessions, status of Jerusalem and refugees' right of return—but lay the groundwork for future talks: the search for a just and lasting solution; commitment to settle existing issues as quickly as possible and to create an environment conducive to negotiations, without pressure, intimidation or threats of violence; commitment to refrain from taking measures that would unilaterally prefigure the terms of future accords; and recognition of the United States as an essential partner in the peace process.

**Bill Clinton's December 23, 2000 peace plan** spells out the "Clinton parameters" for a solution to the problem (which Shlomo Ben-Ami, Saeb Erekat and Madeleine Albright subsequently discussed at the January 2001 Taba Summit). The parties later say this is the closest they ever came to an agreement.

**The June 2002 Arab peace initiative**: meeting in Beirut, the Arab League, under the authority of Saudi Arabia's Prince Abdallah, presents a plan calling for a return to the 1967 borders, including with Syria and Lebanon, in exchange for mutual recognition, the normalization of diplomatic relations and a peace agreement between Israel and all the Arab countries. The Israeli government rejects a total pullout from the West Bank and East Jerusalem and strongly opposes the mass return of Palestinian refugees to Israel.

**The April 30, 2003 roadmap:** the Quartet—the United States led by the new president George W. Bush, the European Union, Russia and the UN—drafts the "roadmap" for peace, which calls for the creation of a Palestinian State by 2005, subject to the cessation of terrorist acts and the holding of democratic elections in the Palestinian territories.

**The December 1, 2003 Geneva initiative,** whose main architects are former Israeli minister Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian minister Yasser Abd Rabbo, calls for divided sovereignty over Jerusalem; Israel's evacuation of 98% of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip; and the settlement of the issue of circulation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The problem of the refugees' right of return will be settled by compensating them. Arafat accepts the document and Sharon rejects it.

**The February 8, 2005 Sharm el-Sheikh summit** (Ariel Sharon-Mahmoud Abbas in the presence of Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's Abdallah II) is basically a ceasefire agreement ending the second Intifada and calling for the exchange of prisoners.

**Israel's 2005 unilateral Gaza withdrawal plan,** which the Israeli government adopted on June 6, 2004, stipulates that the Israeli army will monitor the border between Egypt and Gaza, continue controlling the border around the Gaza Strip, the coasts and air space, and maintain the right to conduct military operations inside that territory. Furthermore, Gaza will remain dependant on Israel for water, means of communication, power and wastewater drainage systems. Imports to the territory will not be taxed but exports will. Israel will collect a tax on foreign products imported to Gaza. The shekel will continue to be the legal currency.

**The November 26, 2007 Annapolis declaration** officializes the "two-State solution" for the first time.

#### ***A. THE DIFFICULT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PALESTINIANS***

The Palestinian political movement is now split into two mutually antagonistic organizations, each with its own territorial base: Fatah on the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza.

##### **1. The origins of the rift: the transformation of Hamas into a political movement**

A brief historical summary is necessary to understand the current situation.

###### *a) The Palestinian movement*

The Palestinian movement has not always been divided. From 1964, when the PLO was created, to 1987, under Yasser Arafat's leadership, it was sufficiently united to conduct negotiations. That is no longer the case.

## 1. Fatah

Certain that the most effective way to defend the Palestinian people's rights was to organize a national revolutionary movement independent of the Arab countries, Yasser Arafat and other leaders founded Fatah, or "Palestinian National Liberation Movement", in Kuwait in 1959. They called for armed struggle with the aim of "liberating all Palestinian territory from the Zionist entity".

Although nearly all Fatah's members are Muslims, the movement declared itself to be secular and politically neutral, in contrast with the avowedly Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The end goal is the establishment of an independent, democratic Palestinian State where all citizens enjoy equal rights regardless of their religion.

## 2. The Palestine Liberation Organization

After the first meeting of the Palestinian National Congress (PNC), and on the Arab League's initiative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Ahmed Shukhairy, was created in Jerusalem in 1964. Unlike Fatah, the PLO's aim was not the creation of a Palestinian State but the liberation of Palestine within the wider framework of the creation of an Arab republic. The new organization was a federation of various groups. At its head, an executive council made decisions, while the National Council served as a representative assembly.

Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Day War shook the PLO, considered too close to the Arab régimes, to its very core and Shukhairy resigned. In 1968 Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which George Habash and Ahmed Jibril founded in 1967, joined the PLO and won half the seats in the PNC. Arafat had the PLO charter amended to take account of Fatah aims. Under his leadership the organization made a commitment to armed struggle and claimed responsibility for many terrorist attacks in Israel and around the world.

At the 1974 Rabat summit the PLO won all the Arab States' diplomatic recognition as the Palestinian people's sole representative. Later that year it obtained observer status at the United Nations, where Arafat made a speech holding a gun in one hand and an olive branch in the other. In 1976 the group joined the Arab League with the rank of a State. Spain became the first country to give a PLO representation full diplomatic status, followed by Portugal, Austria, France, Italy and Greece. Meanwhile, Israel continued to consider it a terrorist group. In 1982 the Israeli army drove the organization out of Beirut. Fatah's partisans fled to Syria and other Arab countries. Arafat and his closest associates took refuge in Tunis.

The PLO gradually fell apart and was on the verge of vanishing altogether when a spontaneous popular uprising, the first Intifada, broke out in the Israeli-occupied territories. It lasted from December 8, 1987 to 1992. Arafat regained control of and reorganized the PLO, whose legitimacy as the



Palestinian people's sole representative was restored. In 1988 he proclaimed the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. He also had the Palestinian National Council adopt a motion accepting the 1967 United Nations Security Council resolution 242 calling for "acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries".

Amending the article of the charter calling for the destruction of Israel and renouncing armed struggle, Arafat wrote a letter on September 9, 1993 to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in which he recognized, on behalf of the PLO, Israel's right to live in peace. In return Rabin recognized the PLO. On September 13, 1993, under US President Bill Clinton's auspices in Washington, they signed the Oslo mutual recognition accords and a declaration clearing the way for a Palestinian administration in the occupied territories.

**Letters of mutual recognition exchanged between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin**

**Letter from Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat recognizing the State of Israel (Tunis, September 9, 1993)**

Mr. Prime Minister,

The signing of the Declaration of Principles marks a new era in the history of the Middle East. In firm conviction thereof, I would like to confirm the following PLO commitments:

The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security

The PLO accepts United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338

The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.

The PLO considers that the signing of the Declaration of Principles constitutes a historic event, inaugurating a new epoch of peaceful coexistence, free from violence and all other acts which endanger peace and stability.

Accordingly, the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators.

In view of the promise of a new era and the signing of the Declaration of Principles and based on Palestinian acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the PLO affirms that those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist, and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with the commitments of this letter are now inoperative and no longer valid.

Consequently, the PLO undertakes to submit to the Palestinian National Council for formal approval the necessary changes in regard to the Palestinian Covenant.

Sincerely,

Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization

**Letter from Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, recognizing the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people (Jerusalem, September 10, 1993).**

In response to your letter of September 9, 1993, I wish to confirm to you that, in light of the PLO commitments included in your letter, the Government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process.

Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister

In 1996, after the Palestinian Authority was set up following the terms of the Oslo accords, Fatah elements joined the new administration and Fatah leader and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat was formally elected head of the Authority. Almost all the Authority's civil servants are former Fatah members; fighters from former Fatah brigades trained the Palestinian security forces.

### 3. Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in Egypt in the 1920s, took root in the Gaza Strip immediately after the Six Day War and rode the wave of Islamic fundamentalism fueled by Arab nationalism's repeated failures to defeat Israel<sup>1</sup>.

At first the Muslim Brotherhood was a social movement. It did not aim to conquer power but to change society. In the occupied territories the Brotherhood built a dense network of social institutions around mosques: kindergartens, libraries, clinics, sports clubs, etc. Created in 1973, the Gaza Islamic Centre, headed by Sheikh Ahmed Yassine, became an important hub of social life. The organization received support from abroad, in particular Saudi Arabia, which sent it considerable funds.

The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood's popularity soon crumbled because of its decision to steer clear of politics. It focused on developing individual piety and enforcing religious precepts, preferring to stay out of the nationalist struggle. Consequently, Israel's intelligence service, Mossad, adopted a hands-off attitude towards the group, considering it a useful

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<sup>1</sup> On this point see Amin Maalouf in "Le dérèglement du Monde" - Grasset, 2009, in particular the chapter entitled "Les légitimités égarées".

counterweight to the PLO<sup>1</sup>. But in 1980 the movement split: Islamic Jihad denounced the Muslim Brotherhood's passivity and committed itself to violent action.

The decision to create Hamas is linked to the first Intifada. In December 1987 Sheikh Yassine took the traditional line because he was convinced a confrontation with Israel would cost his movement too much. It was only after the uprising started and under pressure from the rising generations that he changed his mind and had a leaflet circulated calling on Palestinians to join the Intifada. This was the birth certificate of Hamas, the acronym of *harakat al-muqâwama al-'islâmiya* ("Islamic resistance movement). The entire Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood joined Hamas, giving it considerable strength, especially in the Gaza Strip, where its members attacked isolated Israeli soldiers and burned Israeli-owned property.

On August 18, 1988 Hamas adopted its charter<sup>2</sup>, in which it acknowledged its relationship to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood organization and stated that Palestine is "an Islamic land for all generations of Muslims until Resurrection Day". Despite rivalries and sometimes even clashes, Hamas said about the PLO, "We have the same homeland, the same misfortune, the same destiny and the same enemy."

#### *b) The roots of discord*

The discord stems from the Muslim Brotherhood's transformation into a political movement, Hamas, in head-on competition with Fatah.

Hamas burst upon the political scene by objecting to the PLO's accommodation of Israel, espousing the ideas the older organization had advocated before the mid-1970s, namely the liberation of all Palestine, whereas Arafat had moved on and was preparing to have the PNC recognize its partition.

Israeli officials completely changed their attitude towards Hamas, which took a harder political line than Fatah, and sought to curb its growth. In May 1989 Israeli security services arrested 260 Hamas militants, including Sheikh Yassine, for murder and incitement to violence. He was released in 1997 to prevent Palestinian reprisals after Mossad tried to assassinate Khaled Meshaal in Jordan.

Sheikh Yassine rejected the Oslo accords from his prison cell in 1993. Instead he proposed a *hudna* (truce), in reference to Islamic law, which allows a conditional ceasefire with non-Muslims limited to 10 years maximum, under the condition that Israel pull out of the occupied territories. The principle of

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<sup>1</sup> On this issue see Charles Enderlin, "Quand Israël favorisait le Hamas", *Le Monde*, 4 February 2009.

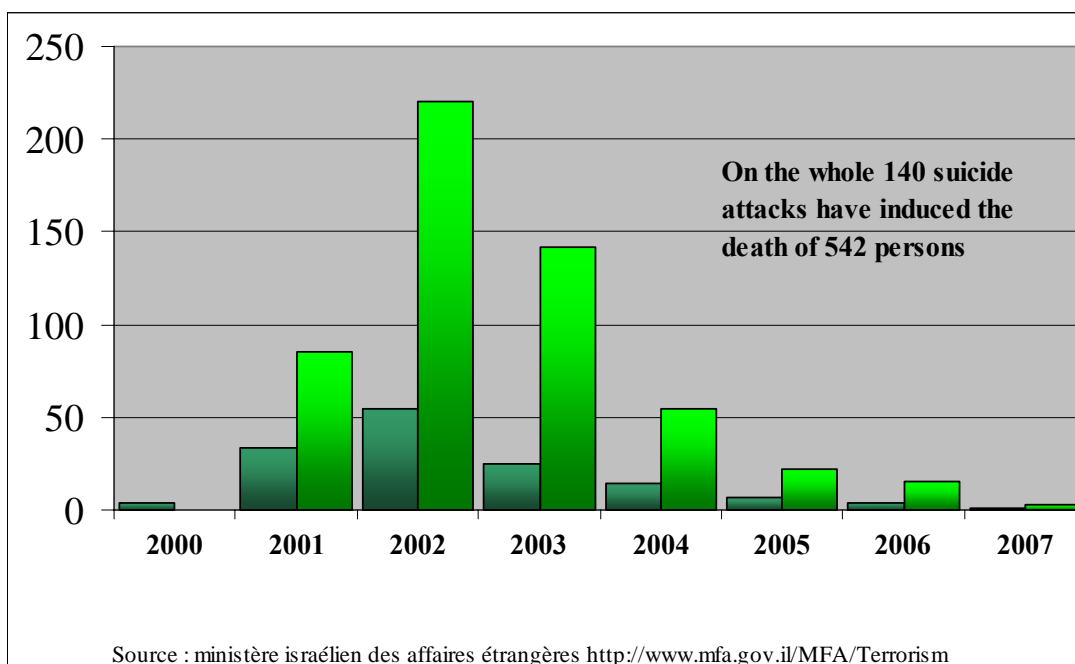
<sup>2</sup> Voir annexe 2

non-recognition of the State of Israel in the Hamas Charter was not called into question. Thus, Hamas and the PLO have very different strategies.

The setting up of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza in 1994 created new challenges for Hamas, which was pulled in different directions by its rhetoric espousing the total liberation of Palestine, desire to prevent the outbreak of a Palestinian civil war, and determination to preserve its network of grass-roots organizations. The group began a dialogue with Yasser Arafat, who held out the carrot and the stick, stepping up arrests and intimidation while talking to the Organization and authorizing some of its press organs. In late 1995 he even seemed to be on the verge of letting Hamas participate in the January 1996 elections to the Palestinian Parliament, which it would have rejected.

Itzhak Rabin's assassination in November 1995, the escalation between Israeli forces and Hamas marked by a wave of suicide bombings in 1996, the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory and Benjamin Netanyahu's victory in Israel's 1996 legislative elections changed everything and prompted Hamas to take a line of violent, radical opposition that associated Fatah with the failure of the peace process and the Palestinian Authority's ineffectiveness.

The hard line came into its own with the second Intifada, which broke out in September 2000 and definitively split the two movements. Hamas's military leaders organized a suicide bombing campaign that climaxed in 2002, killing over 200 Israeli civilians and wounding 2,000 others in that year alone. In 2003 Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, one of Hamas's co-founders, said that the Shoah had never happened. Hamas's television network, Al Aqsa TV, broadcast programs with anti-Semitic overtones. That was not to be forgotten in Israel.



Canada, Japan, the United States and Israel put Hamas on their lists of terrorist organizations in 2002, the European Union in September 2003. In Great Britain and Australia only the armed branch of Hamas, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam brigades, was declared terrorist. On March 22, 2004, on orders from Ariel Sharon, the Israeli air force assassinated Sheikh Yassine in Gaza in a "targeted execution" in retaliation for suicide attacks. His successor Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi was assassinated a few days after his appointment. The PLO and Fatah now seemed moderate compared to Hamas.

*c) Mahmoud Abbas's election in 2005*

When Arafat died on November 11, 2004 it was only natural for Mahmoud Abbas to succeed him. Under the *nom de guerre* Abu Mazen, he was one of Fatah's founders in 1959. Abbas had belonged to the movement's radical wing and helped plan the 1972 attack on the Israeli Olympic team in Munich<sup>1</sup>. He had been Arafat's faithful companion, following him everywhere he went in exile, participating in the launch of secret talks in Oslo and serving as PLO General Secretary. In addition, he had been Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority and even opposed Arafat to try and establish his authority over the administration. He had experience with power and enjoyed a certain aura in Palestinian society.

As soon as the second Intifada broke out, Abbas requested an end to attacks against Israel, which had begun to consider him an "acceptable interlocutor". He also enjoyed support from the Western powers, which had required Arafat to create the prime minister position for him in 2003. His candidacy was even stronger since his main rival, Marwan Barghouti, a secular centrist, was in an Israeli prison for his involvement in the second Intifada.

Although opposed to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Abbas failed to obtain control of the security forces, making him a candidate acceptable for all Palestinians.

Hamas did not run a candidate against Abbas in the presidential elections because he refused to let it join the Oslo accord institutions. In a strong position because of the absence of a credible opposition and his personal background, Abbas won the presidential election on January 9, 2005.

His election changed everything. "Yasser Arafat conducted a complicated policy trying to keep a balance between Fatah and Hamas," wrote the historian Henry Laurens. "He always held to his cardinal rule: avoid a Palestinian civil war, even if it means lying, using trickery or contradicting himself from one day to the next."<sup>2</sup> Abbas's election as president of the Palestinian Authority spelled the end of the balancing act, especially since Hamas changed its strategy and completed its transformation from a social

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<sup>1</sup> See Henry Laurens, interview with the JDD, 9 January 2009 entitled "Abbas n'a rien apporté".

<sup>2</sup> Above-mentioned interview

movement into a political force with aspirations of becoming the Palestinian people's legitimate leader.

*d) Hamas's victory in the legislative elections and the start of the Gaza blockade<sup>1</sup>*

Hamas candidates ran in the 2005 Palestinian municipal elections. Their success consecrated the organization as a significant political force opposed to Fatah.

On January 25, 2006 legislative elections took place on the West Bank and in Gaza under the watchful eye of international observers. Hamas won the elections, which were considered free and fair, with 42.9% of the vote.

<b>Party</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Seats</b>
Hamas	42,9	434 817	74
Fatah	39,8	403 458	45
FPLP	4,1	41 671	3
Alternatives Independant	2,8	28 779	2
Palestine	2,6	26 554	2
Third Way	2,3	23 513	2
Independents	5,2	-	4
Others	0,3	53 200	0

In the Gaza Strip Hamas had an even stronger lead, with 48.2% of the vote compared to 43.6% for Fatah. Of the Palestinian Parliament's 132 deputies, 74 are Hamas members compared to 45 for Fatah.

Two factors seem to have been decisive in Hamas's success: the corruption of the Palestinian Authority (and therefore of Fatah) and, above all, the fact that the road Fatah chose in Oslo—negotiation and the abandonment of armed struggle—has run into a dead end. Hamas says it is not hostile to talks but thinks they must be accompanied by military pressure. Some Fatah leaders, in particular Marwan Barghouti, defended the same position early in the second Intifada.

On February 21, 2006 Mahmoud Abbas named Hamas member Ismail Haniyeh prime minister. On March 19, after unsuccessful negotiations,

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2

Haniyeh announced the formation of his government, with Fatah refusing to join.

Israel refused contact with the Hamas government. Ehud Olmert, the new prime minister, decided to suspend the transfer of customs duties it owed the Palestinian Authority. Many donors, including the European Union, also suspended their financial aid. The entrance and exit points between Gaza and Israel were often closed, resulting in food shortages for 1.5 million people. The Gaza blockade was on.

On June 9, 2006 an Israeli Navy bombardment killed ten Palestinian civilians. In reprisal, after an 18-month truce rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel. On June 25 Palestinian commandos attacked an Israeli army camp in southern Gaza, killing two soldiers, wounding two others and kidnapping French-Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit.

On June 28 Israel responded with a bombing campaign, "Summer Rains", and arrested eight ministers, several deputies and Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip. The operation lasted until November 26. By September, five months after the Gaza blockade started, the humanitarian situation was very bad, as the ICRC attested.

#### **12-09-2006 Press release**

#### **Gaza –ICRC bulletin no. 06 / 2006**

##### **General situation**

The almost permanent closure of entry and exit points, the continued incursions by Israeli military forces and the non-payment of salaries to civil servants continue to mark the lives of the 1.4 million residents of the Gaza strip. The mood of the population is described as one of despair, with little hope seen for any improvement in the situation..

An estimated two thirds of Gaza's residents are now living below the poverty line of 2 US dollars per day. Many have reduced their essential expenses to meet minimum nutritional requirements...

In autumn 2006 tensions were running high between Hamas and Fatah. Abbas asked Hamas to recognize the accords already negotiated with Israel, while Islamic fundamentalist leaders rejected what might be interpreted as implicit recognition of the State of Israel. Abbas outlawed the Hamas militia, which marked the start of violent clashes between the two movements. Until then the conflict between Hamas and Fatah had been primarily political. Now it was also military.

##### *e) The Mecca agreement and the national unity government*

On February 8, 2007 Hamas and Fatah announced an agreement in Mecca to form a national unity government led by acting Prime Minister Haniyeh. Talks between President Abbas and Hamas's exiled leader Khaled

Meshaal led to a distribution of ministerial positions and a common political program including respect for the Israeli-Palestinian accords already signed but not recognition of Israel.

By putting Haniyeh in charge of forming the national unity government President Abbas affirmed that the expected cabinet had to "respect" the accords concluded by the PLO, including those signed with Israel, which implicitly amounted to recognition of the Jewish State.

The United States and Europe overlooked this major advance and demanded explicit recognition of Israel in exchange for resuming ties with Haniyeh's government.

Hamas refused, invoking the Mecca agreement, which did not require it to do so. It nevertheless agreed that the national unity government in which it participated would respect the accords signed by the PLO, which indirectly amounted to the same thing.

### **The February 8, 2007 Mecca agreement**

The accord sought to:

- ban the shedding of the Palestinian blood and to take all measures and arrangements to prevent the shedding of the Palestinian blood and to stress on the importance of national unity as basis for national steadfastness and confronting the occupation and to achieve the legitimate national goals of the Palestinian people
- adopt the language of dialogue as the sole basis for solving the political disagreements in the Palestinian arena.
- agree to form a Palestinian national unity government according to a detailed agreement ratified by both sides and to start on an urgent basis to take the constitutional measures to form this government
- agree to move ahead on measures to activate and reform the PLO and accelerate the work of the preparatory committee based on the Cairo and Damascus Understandings
- guarantee the principle of political partnership on the basis of the effective laws in the PNA and on the basis of political pluralism according to an agreement ratified between both parties.

#### *f) Hamas's seizure of power in Gaza*

Despite the Mecca accord, the ceasefire was broken on May 18, 2007. On June 7, 115 people died and 550 were wounded in clashes between the two factions. Human Rights Watch accused both sides of violating international humanitarian law and, in some cases, war crimes. On June 14 Hamas took control by force of the entire Gaza Strip.

Abbas responded by declaring a state of emergency, dismissing the national unity government and putting Salam Fayyad, the previous government's finance minister, in charge of forming an emergency cabinet.



Fayyad's government was sworn in on June 17 in Ramallah. It was not recognized by Hamas, which declared the new prime minister's appointment unconstitutional. They had a point: the Palestinian Authority's president should have chosen the new prime minister from the ranks of the majority party, Hamas<sup>1</sup>.

The Western powers backed Abbas and Fayyad's government. Hamas controlled the Gaza Strip, while the West Bank was in Fatah's hands. The Palestinian territories were *de facto* split into two entities controlled by rival political parties.

## 2. The tragedy of Gaza and the armed struggle between Hamas and Fatah

### *a) The sequence of events*

Israel and Hamas concluded a six-month ceasefire on June 19, 2008. From that date until the end of October 2008, 38 rockets were fired into southern Israel. Hamas, which said it respected its commitment to the truce, claimed responsibility for the attacks. Contrary to the ceasefire agreement, Israel did not lift the blockade in place since June 2006.

On November 4, 2008 the Israeli army made an incursion into Palestinian territory. In retaliation Hamas fired rockets towards Israel. On December 14 Khaled Meshaal announced that the truce would not be renewed. Five days later Israel refused to lift the Gaza blockade. The rocket fire intensified, climaxing on December 26, 2008 when over 80 hit towns in south-central Israel.

	Number of rockets	Comments	Number of mortar shells
2001	4		245
2002	35		257
2003	155		265
2004	281		876
2005	179	108 before Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, 71 afterwards	238
2006	946		22
2007	896	421 before Hamas took control, 475 afterwards	749
2008	1 571	571 rockets and 205 mortars during operation "cast lead"	1 531
2009	481	between 1 January and 2 June*	183

Source: Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC)

\* The Israeli count includes all attacks, but they essentially stopped on 19 January.

<sup>1</sup> Article 121 of the Palestinian Constitution of 26 March 2003 states that "after consultations with the representative parties, the President shall name the Prime Minister from the party that obtained the largest number of seats in the House of Representatives."

On December 27 the Israeli government ordered the bombardment of Hamas installations in a large-scale military operation called "Cast Lead" by the Israelis and the "Black Saturday Massacre" by the Palestinians. The death toll in the first four days was 400.

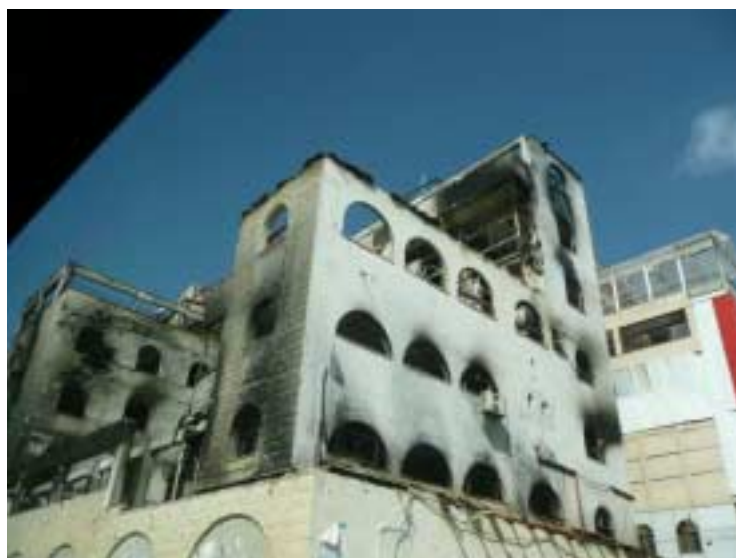
Israeli officials maintained a blackout on information from the Gaza Strip and banned foreign journalists from entering it. Both parties waged a veritable war of information in the media and on the Internet. Shocked by what they saw on television, many people took to the streets in Arab cities and some Western capitals. Fatah militants and officials joined several Hamas demonstrations on the West Bank.

The already shaky humanitarian situation dramatically broke down. On January 8, 2009 the UN suspended all its activities in Gaza and warned the Israeli army after it bombarded one of its humanitarian convoys. A million people were deprived of electricity, 750,000 of running water. Hospitals were overcrowded and exhausted medical staffs lacked medicine.

On January 17, 2009, three days before Barack Obama took office, Israel and Hamas decreed unilateral ceasefires, which were never officialized but are still in force.

*b) The scope of the tragedy*

The Senate mission entered Gaza on January 29, 2009. It noted the destruction of the international American school, an UNWRA warehouse, Al Qods Hospital and the industrial area near the Karni checkpoint. The rapporteurs were surprised at the selectivity and precision of the Israel strikes, which systematically targeted infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and administrative buildings, causing a high number of civilian casualties. They were also shocked by the use of white phosphorus incendiary bombs on the UNWRA warehouse and Al Qods Hospital.



Al Qods Hospital  
Gaza seen from the  
rear after the Israeli  
bombardment

January 29, 2009  
Senate Mission



Playroom of the Al Qods Hospital pediatric ward after being hit by a white phosphorus bomb

January 29, 2009  
Senate Mission



UNWRA medicine warehouse in Gaza after an Israeli bombardment

January 29, 2009  
Senate Mission



American international school in Beit Lahya – totally destroyed

January 29, 2009  
Senate Mission

Surprisingly, the UN Security Council had no reaction to the shelling and destruction of UNWRA buildings.

*c) The toll of operation "Cast Lead"*

A Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) report dated March 12, 2009 put the death toll at 1,434, of which 82% were civilians. The Israeli foreign affairs ministry put its country's death toll at 13, including three civilians. Seven of the 10 soldiers died in friendly-fire incidents. So much for the casualties. What were the political repercussions of operation "Cast Lead"? Israel had not clearly stated its war aims but probably sought to achieve two military and political goals.

The only stated military objective was stop the rocket attacks. Israel achieved that goal, but the cost was a very high number of civilian Palestinian casualties.

The Israeli army also probably sought to restore its credibility, which had been shaken by the semi-failure of the last war in Lebanon in 2006, when it suffered many losses in the teeth of fierce resistance from Hezbollah.

Television pictures showing the Israeli forces' destructive effectiveness seem to have restored Israelis' confidence in its army.

But the impact on international opinion, shocked by the Israeli army's extreme brutality, was deeply negative.

Several NGOs, in particular Israeli ones, listed the violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Israeli army.

The UN Human Rights Council asked a fact-finding mission led by judge Richard Goldstone to investigate the accusations. On September 15, 2009 the mission handed in its findings, which concluded that the Israeli army's attacks on Gaza had been "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate, and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself and to force upon it an ever-increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability."<sup>1</sup>

The report also noted that "The continuum is evident most immediately with the policy of blockade that preceded the operations and that in the Mission's view amounts to collective punishment intentionally inflicted by the Government of Israel on the people of the Gaza Strip... These measures were imposed by the State of Israel purportedly to isolate and weaken Hamas after its electoral victory..." It concluded that "the Gaza military operations were, according to the Israeli Government, thoroughly and extensively planned. While the Israeli Government has sought to portray its operations as essentially a

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<sup>1</sup> *Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories – Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza conflict – Human Rights Council – Twelfth session – Agenda item 7 – advance edited version p. 525 item 1690.*

response to rocket attacks in the exercise of its right to self defense, the Mission considers the plan to have been directed, at least in part, at a different target: the people of Gaza as a whole."<sup>1</sup>

Faced with Israeli firepower, outnumbered Hamas combatants deliberately refused to fight. Consequently, the operation only moderately damaged its military potential and political apparatus.

Politically, the main aim of the Kadima party's leader, Tzipi Livni, and her allies was to show that they were at least as determined as their right-wing rivals to implement an aggressive policy against Israel's enemies. Nevertheless, despite good electoral results Livni was unable to form a coalition government and eventually had to step aside so that her rival, Benyamin Netanyahu, could become prime minister.

The strategy of attempting to isolate Hamas from the rest of Gaza's population seems to have failed. Hamas is in firm control of Gaza, although it is unknown how popular it is.

"Cast Lead" increased the Palestinians' thirst for revenge against Israel. All of Arab opinion shares that view, which has strengthened the hostility of the "Arab street" against the West, considered Israel's accomplice.

On the whole, the operation left Hamas in a stronger position. In an "asymmetrical" conflict, it the weaker party merely survive it wins.

Hamas controls the Gaza Strip with an iron fist. It drapes itself in the flag of the resistance and Fatah is spent as a political force in Gaza. Its representation offices have been closed. Pressure on the movement's staff is growing on every level day by day. All demonstrations are banned. The blockade benefits Hamas, which collects taxes on trade through the tunnels in the Rafah area. Hamas is methodically working to Islamize society, indoctrinating children, pressuring women to wear the veil, ousting Palestinian Authority civil servants, etc. The Authority has met with fierce criticism, including on the West Bank, for having banned, under Fayyad's authority and in cooperation with Israeli officials, all demonstrations to support Gaza, deemed a threat to public order.

The gulf between the two Palestinian movements has never been wider.

*d) What does Khaled Meshaal want?*

The rapporteurs thought it was impossible to assess the situation without hearing the views of a key player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Hamas. They interviewed its political leader, Khaled Meshaal, in Damascus on January 20, 2009, the day after the ceasefire. The meeting took place without

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<sup>1</sup> Report mentioned above, p. 521 item 1675 and p. 523 item 1680

help from the French Embassy, which is not allowed to make contact with Hamas<sup>1</sup>.

Meshaal said that all attempts to wipe out Hamas in Gaza by force had failed. The movement now has electoral as well as military legitimacy because it survived the test of strength Israel had imposed on it. Israel's failure also shows that despite its power it cannot defeat the Palestinians and that the only road to peace goes through the recognition of their rights.

Meshaal said Hamas accepts the prospect of a 10-year truce with Israel and does not rule out the possibility of a permanent ceasefire but demands first that it withdraw from the West Bank occupied territories and allows the creation of a Palestinian State.

He said the main issue blocking the designation of a good Palestinian interlocutor to conduct peace talks, in other words one who represents a national unity government, was the refusal to accept Hamas as an indispensable player on the Palestinian stage.

When asked about the possibility of amending the Hamas Charter and recognizing the State of Israel, Meshaal answered:

"What did Mahmoud Abbas and Yasser Arafat before him obtain in return for recognizing Israel and renouncing the PLO Covenant? Nothing.

"The Arabs made a generous peace offer in 2002 (Prince Abdallah of Saudi Arabia's "Arab peace initiative"). Did Israel respond? No. Even Hamas made a generous offer in 2006, when the Palestinian factions reached a consensus after the reconciliation.

"We implicitly agreed to recognize Israel within its 1967 borders as long as the rights of the Palestinians are recognized and they enjoy genuine sovereignty... Consequently, the recognition of Israel is not a problem... The solution is to make a Palestinian State possible, then to ask that State to recognize Israel."

### **3. The present standstill**

#### *a) Three deadlocks*

**The conflict of legitimacy:** Hamas draws its legitimacy from the legislative elections and the Gaza tragedy. It possesses what Amin Maalouf calls "fighting legitimacy". Fatah controls the Palestinian Authority, the only organization whose legitimacy Israel and the international community recognize to conduct negotiations. New presidential and legislative elections should resolve the conflict of legitimacy, especially since blood has flowed

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<sup>1</sup> See the complete interview in appendix 4.

between the two movements and the settling of scores has become commonplace.

**The territorial division:** Hamas controls Gaza. The price it paid to achieve that goal was too high to give it up without receiving very serious concessions in return. Despite appalling living conditions everything suggests that the population is primarily angry at Israel. Small extremist groups claiming allegiance to Al Qaeda have appeared. Fatah wields a semblance of power on the West Bank and controls the PLO. Giving that up would doom the organization to disappear, especially since Abbas obtained nothing substantial in exchange for cooperating with Israel. On the contrary, the Israeli army's incursions and "extrajudicial executions" in the West Bank undermine the Palestinian Authority's credibility. The deadlock does not stand in the way of the formation of a provisional government but it is an obstacle to the creation of a Palestinian State.

The third rift is **political**. Assuming both parties reach a compromise and form a unity government leaving each movement in control of its own territory, on what basis would they conduct negotiations and with what program? Should Hamas start by recognizing Israel, as Fatah did, or could that recognition come at the end of talks, as Hamas suggests?

*b) The inter-Palestinian negotiations in Cairo*

The "inter-Palestinian dialogue" began in Cairo on February 26 and lasted only a few days. A second meeting took place from March 10 to 20 to lay the groundwork for dialogue. Other sessions have been held. The talks seem to have come up against three stumbling blocks.

First, the program: Hamas wants the government to have a real political role, whereas Fatah would like it to focus on three missions—planning elections, rebuilding Gaza and establishing territorial unity.

Second, the debate remains open on the next government's need to "recognize" (the Mecca agreement's wording) or "endorse" (as Fatah demands) the PLO's commitments. All the participants acknowledge that asking Hamas to recognize Israel from the outset would be futile and that a better idea would be to foster the conditions for a resumption of talks.

Third, the overhaul of the security forces raises a problem. Each is determined to control the armed forces upon which its political survival depends.

Nevertheless, the parties reached agreement on two important points.

Elections: the Palestinians must elect a new president, legislative council and national council (the PLO's legislative body) by January 25, 2010. There is still disagreement on the voting method for the elections to the Palestinian National Council, to which Hamas does not belong.

PLO reform: the goal is to boost its representativeness both inside and outside. A new Palestinian National Council could be elected based on 100% proportional representation. Meanwhile, Hamas refuses to formally join the group in order to avoid having to recognize the PLO's current structures and gains.

The inter-Palestinian dialogue has produced no results as of the date the present report was written. For the negotiations to succeed it is necessary either for Hamas to agree to recognize Israel prior to any negotiation or for Israel to agree to negotiate with a Palestinian government including one or more members it does not recognize.

Those two conditions seem out of reach.

## ***B. ISRAEL'S ACCEPTANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, OF A PALESTINIAN STATE***

Israel has faced a dilemma since its creation: choose between a binational State within its present borders at the risk of dissolving the country's Jewish identity or accept a Palestinian State in return for giving back or exchanging settlement land and compromising its military security. Israel has never really chosen between the two and its governments seem to use negotiations as a stalling tactic.

### **1. Israel's dilemma**

#### *a) The solution of a binational State*

The binational State would be a single entity encompassing Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, in which Jews and Arabs would have legal equality. That is the situation in the State of Israel today.

If all the Palestinian territories are absorbed into a single State, Arabs would swiftly become the majority of the population, jeopardizing Israel's Jewish identity.

The latest Israeli Statistics Office report puts Israel's population at 7,411,500: 75.5%, or 5,592,600, are Jews, including the 500,000 settlers living outside the 1967 borders, and 20.2%, or 1.5 million, are Israeli Arabs, mostly Muslims but also Christians. In addition, 321,000 immigrants are registered with the Interior Ministry as "non-Jewish". The count does not include the approximately 150,000 foreign workers living in Israel.

In a binational State covering the territory of historic Palestine, 1.5 million Gaza Strip residents as well as 2.3 million West Bank and East Jerusalem inhabitants would join the Israeli Arabs to form a total Palestinian population of 5.5 million.



In those conditions, it is understandable that the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population, attached to the Jewish character of the State created in 1948, rejects the prospect of a binational entity<sup>1</sup>.

In this regard, UN resolution 181 of November 29 1947 uses the terms "Jewish State" to refer to Israel and "Arab State" for the Palestinian entity several times. From the outset, Israel has been a State whose reason for existing is to be a safe haven for the Jewish people.

*b) The two-State solution*

The other solution would be two States within the post-1967 borders, which would give 78% of historic Palestine's territory to Israel<sup>2</sup>. The problem is that since the Six Day War every Israeli government has let many settlers move onto land outside the 1967 borders, to territories internationally recognized as Palestinian, except the Gaza Strip, which Ariel Sharon evacuated in 2005 with approval from the Knesset.

**Israeli settler population**

	<i>West Bank</i>	<i>East Jerusalem</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>1972</b>	1 182	8 649	9 831
<b>1993</b>	111 600	152 800	264 400
<b>2000</b>	192 976	172 250	365 226
<b>2003</b>	224 669	178 601	403 270
<b>2006</b>	268 400	186 857	455 257
<b>2007</b>	282 000	190 000	472 000

Source : Central bureau of statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel

In addition to the expansion of the settlements themselves, infrastructure, in particular roads reserved for settlers connecting them to one another and 600 checkpoints intended to control the Palestinians' movements, is growing. Settlements and roads dislodge Palestinians from their land and make their living conditions unbearable. Economic growth of the interior "archipelago"<sup>3</sup> the Palestinian territories form today is impossible in those conditions. Israel has never wanted or been able to choose between the two solutions.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 6: Israel's political system and the proclamation of independence.

<sup>2</sup> See map in appendix

<sup>3</sup> See map in appendix 5

## 2. The lesser of two evils for Israel

The definition of a dilemma is that no solution is satisfactory. From that viewpoint, the acceptance of a Palestinian State raises the thorny issue of the status of Jerusalem and the settlements. Their expansion on the West Bank is an obstacle to the creation of a territorially coherent and politically independent Palestinian State, which, however, would be the lesser of two evils for both parties.

### *a) Israel's long-term interests*

Only the two-State solution would finally give the Palestinian people their independence and dignity and offer Israelis the promise of living in security within internationally recognized borders.

It is not in the Israelis' long-term interest to live surrounded by hostile peoples and to turn their backs on the region where they chose to establish their homeland, locked behind walls they built in fear of suicide attacks or deadly uprisings.

Is it in the United States's and Europe's interest to refuse to let the Palestinian people have the State to which they legitimately aspire and to be hated because of that by 300 million Arabs and a billion Muslims?

### *b) The Israelis' choice*

Everything suggests that Israeli citizens are ready to accept the two-State solution. Many polls show that a big majority rejects the binational State solution but accepts the prospect of two States. According to a Onevoice survey conducted on April 22, 2009<sup>1</sup>, 78% lean in favor of a two-State solution compared to 74% in 2007.

Percentage of Israelis	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
A shared State: a binational federal State in which Israelis and Palestinians share power	7	6	11	8	66
The two-State solution: two States for two peoples, Israel and Palestine	32	13	16	17	21
A political statu quo with economic development in Palestine/the West Bank/Gaza	27	18	12	14	24
A confederation between the West Bank and Jordan and between Gaza and Egypt	19	20	15	17	21
A Jewish State from the Jordanian border to the sea	17	10	11	8	47

When the total of percentages does not reach 100, it means the rest "did not answer"

<sup>1</sup> "Israel and Palestine: Public Opinion, Public Diplomacy and Peace Making"; available on the Internet: [http://www.onevoicemovement.org/programs/polling\\_contents.php](http://www.onevoicemovement.org/programs/polling_contents.php)

*c) The feasibility of an agreement*

The two-State solution's parameters are known. They were the focus of long negotiations under the aegis of President Clinton and, later, during the Annapolis process, which officialized the "solution of two separate States" for the first time in the joint declaration of all the parties.

The solutions were not that different from the "parameters" President Clinton listed in his December 23, 2000 peace plan. Here are the main points.

**1. Land:** President Clinton concluded that 94 to 96% of Israeli-occupied territories should be handed over to the Palestinians. Israel should also give the Palestinians an equivalent amount of land in exchange for keeping territory where its settlements lie.

**2. Security:** Israeli forces would remain stationed in fixed positions in the Jordan Valley for 36 months under the monitoring of an international force. That period could be shortened if the situation allowed. Three Israeli early-warning bases would remain on the West Bank according to terms renegotiable every 10 years. The Palestinian State would have had full sovereignty over its airspace, but the two parties were asked to conclude agreements allowing Israeli forces to train there. The Israelis had suggested calling the future country a "demilitarized State" and the Palestinians "a State with armament". President Clinton had proposed calling it a "non-militarized State". It was also foreseen that an international force would be in charge of border security.

**3. Jerusalem:** President Clinton proposed assigning Arab-populated areas to the Palestinian State and predominantly Jewish ones to Israel<sup>1</sup>.

**4. Refugees:** the Palestinians would have the right to settle in a Palestinian State but Israel could admit only a limited number of refugees.

**5. The end of the conflict:** signing the accord would necessarily end the conflict and application of UN resolutions 242 and 338 would be concluded by the release of prisoners.

The rapporteurs questioned the Palestinian Saeb Erekat, who was a negotiator when the Clinton parameters were discussed. Here is what he said:

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<sup>1</sup> *This parameter is no longer relevant in 2009 because Arab quarters have shrunk due to settlements, Jewish families have moved in and many Palestinian homes have been destroyed.*

"We had no negotiations at all between 2000 and 2007. We had contacts on checkpoints and settler activity but that's all. We only talked about day-to-day issues.

"And then there was Annapolis in 2007. That was the first time our prime ministers (Olmert and Abbas) sat down at the same table and talked. There were around 100 hours of negotiations. Did that lead to an agreement? No. Did we really negotiate deeply? Yes. Did we shatter taboos and cross lines? Yes. The talks reached a point where there was no longer any need to negotiate, just to decide. The decision did not come.

"The negotiations took the 1967 borders as their basis, including Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. We kept the idea of exchanging land. We included wording on how Europe could play an effective role in maintaining regional security.

"We Palestinians wrote those ideas down on a piece of paper and asked the Israelis 'do you agree?' But the Israelis failed to stop the growth of settlements, in particular the three main ones: Ariel, Gush Etzion and Ma'ale Adumin. Israel wanted us to accept facts on the ground. That was not possible.

"There will be a decision at the end of the negotiations. But what determines whether or not the agreement lasts is its balanced character and fairness."

If the Palestinians, the other Arab countries and the international community want a two-State solution, and the majority of the Israeli know all its details and accept it, why delay the decision?

### **3. Stalling as strategy**

The rapporteurs had the sense that Israeli administrations use any pretext, good or bad, to stall for time and postpone decisions. Three factors may explain their nearly congenital inability to make choices that would lead to a "just and lasting" peace with the Palestinians.

#### *a) Israel's security*

According to most polls, in particular those conducted by the *Onevoice* movement, security is what matters most to Israelis.

Priority in order of importance	Percentage of Palestinians	Considered very important by x%	Percentage of Israelis	Considered very important by x%
1	A sovereign independent State of Palestine	97	Security for Israel	77
2	The refugees' right of return	95	Agreement on Jerusalem's future	68
3	Agreement on Jerusalem's future	94	Right to natural resources	62
4	Agreement on managing the holy places	91	Agreement on managing the holy places	57
5	Security for Palestine	90	Agreement on borders	49
6	Settlements on the West Bank and in the occupied territories	89	Peace between Israel and Jordan	47
7	Rights to natural resources	88	Peace between Israel and Egypt	46
8	Agreements on the borders between Israel and Palestine	77	Peace between Israel and the Arab world	37
9	Peace between Israel and the Arab world	35	Peace between Israel and Lebanon	36
10	Peace between Israel and Lebanon	31	Peace between Israel and Syria	36
11	Peace between Israel and Syria	30	A sovereign independant State of Palestine	33
12	Security for Israel	21	Agreement on managing the holy places	33
13	Peace between Israel and Jordan		Peace between Israel and Iran	29
14	Peace between Israel and Egypt		Refugees' rights	25
15	Peace between Israel and Iran		Security for Palestine	23

However, Israel enjoys almost total security because the strength of its army dissuades potential enemies.

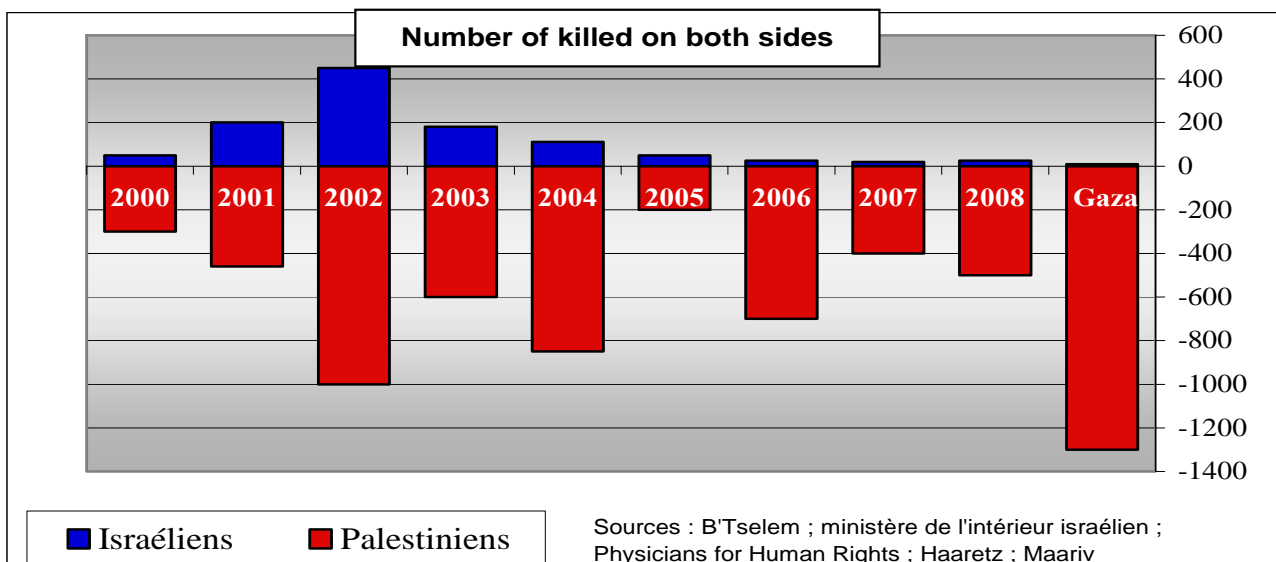
The Israeli army has overwhelming superiority in the region. That is not just a matter of military equipment, organization or training but also of strategy, which is based on the thought of Israel's founder, Ben Gurion<sup>1</sup>, who said the country's army must be superior to the total of all the armies capable of threatening it. To achieve that goal, he added, Israel must have the best possible intelligence in order to benefit from early warning because it cannot afford to be taken by surprise. That is the role of Mossad and the air force. Israel must also have the capacity to dissuade its enemies from attacking.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, in the event of war it must win a decisive victory as swiftly as possible. Those principles ensure Israel's military supremacy at least as much as the

<sup>1</sup> This idea was presented to us by Gridi Grinstein, director of the Reut Institute, an independent think tank, and advisor to the government on strategic decisions.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Center for Strategic & International Studies' recent "Study on a Possible Israeli Strike on Iran's Nuclear Development Facilities" – Washington – Abdullah Toukan & Anthony H. Cordesman – March 14, 2009, Israel might have 200 or more nuclear warheads.

value of its weaponry. The result is that no Arab State, not even the most radical, can consider attacking Israel. All are in defensive postures.

In contrast, Israel's traditional strategy towards asymmetrical conflicts has proven ineffective, in particular during the last intervention in Lebanon, when some Israeli think tanks said that Israeli forces are "strategically inferior" to Hezbollah or Hamas and proposed a shift in military doctrine. One goal of operation "Cast Lead" was to make an appropriate response to asymmetrical confrontations. The idea was simple: the Israelis would restore its capacity to dissuade non-State attacks by ruthlessly responding to the slightest assault no matter what the cost in civilian casualties and infrastructure.



That tactic proved effective in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was used by Europe's colonial armies and by the US army when conquering the West. Israel's security is guaranteed. In 2008, 35 Israelis were victims of political violence, including 23 civilians<sup>1</sup>. Hamas abandoned suicide attacks in April 2006 and the last action for which it claimed responsibility dates back to January 2005. Four Israelis, three of them soldiers, have been killed since the beginning of 2009. In contrast, the Palestinian population has paid a heavy price in recent years.

That does not mean Israeli citizens are not in danger, but that Israel has never been safer. Consequently, the need to negotiate and make concessions is not as strong.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Israeli foreign affairs minister.

*b) The weakness of Israel's political system*

Israeli elections are based on full proportional representation, which leads to the fragmentation of political forces into a host of parties forced into coalitions. The prime minister is always his allies' hostage. Many linchpin parties have radical, if not extremist, positions. Full proportional representation gives their deputies the power of life or death over any government. Few prime ministers have been able to finish their terms without holding early elections. The prospect of frequent elections makes it impossible for any democracy to craft a long-term strategy. In such a system, any Israeli prime minister intent on making the concessions necessary for the conclusion of peace jeopardizes his or her government. That is why none has ever really tried to stop settlements, even though settlers account for just 8% of the population.

The settlements have grown fastest under Ehud Olmert's government, sworn in on 14 April 2006. The NGO Peace Now says that building in West Bank and "unauthorized" settlements grew by 60% in 2008, the year of the Annapolis accord, which called for a settlement freeze. Peace Now also says settlers took advantage of the Gaza War, which captured public attention, to expand settlements and build new roads between them.

"Unauthorized" settlements, as opposed to settlements "authorized" by Israeli officials, are technically illegal. International law, in particular the United Nations Charter and article 47-4 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, forbids annexation, which applies to all settlements, even if they are "authorized".

If Israel's security is guaranteed, and if it would be suicidal for governments to make the concessions necessary for the conclusion of an accord, what would be the incentive for the Israelis to return to the negotiating table?

*c) The unshakeable relationship with the United States*

1. George W. Bush's policy

The relationship between Israel and the United States never seemed as close as it did under George W. Bush, who almost automatically aligned his policy with Israel's positions and sent it massive amounts of military equipment.

Israel consistently receives more US military aid than any other country in the world: an average of \$1.8 billion a year since 1987 in funding and equipment sales. That amount rose to \$2.4 billion under the Clinton administration. In 2007 the United States increased its aid to Israel by 25% to \$3 billion a year for the following decade. In addition, George W. Bush assured Prime Minister Olmert that the United States would guarantee that the

equipment delivered to Israel would have a qualitative edge over that sold to the other countries in the Middle East<sup>1</sup>.

The U.S. Congressional Research Service says that between 1998 and 2005 United States contracts worth over \$9.5 billion provided the Israeli army with almost all its supplies. Although the government's agreement is necessary for weapons exports, Israel deals directly with American companies for its supplies. It has the world's biggest F-16 fleet outside the United States.

The Bush administration backed up its military help with unfailing diplomatic support, which probably had as much to do with the pro-Israeli lobby's activism<sup>2</sup> as with the convictions of certain neoconservatives close to the US president.

## 2. New US policy

President Obama's heartfelt, inspiring and important Cairo speech on June 4, 2009 shows he has broken with his predecessor and shifted course in the Middle East. Actions may speak louder than words, but in the Middle East words matter.

From the viewpoint of US domestic policy the new administration's position seems courageous because 78% of American Jews voted for Obama. US support for Israel is becoming more critical while remaining "unshakeable". President Obama has asked the Israeli government to recognize the need for a Palestinian State and to freeze new settlement growth.

The Israeli prime minister changed his position and reluctantly agreed to the creation of a Palestinian State, but only in return for the Palestinians' recognition of Israel's Jewish character, the demilitarization of their future State and the international community's guarantee of Israel's security. As a token of goodwill he had a few unauthorized settlements evacuated and lifted some barriers on the West Bank, but rejected a "total" settlement freeze and demanded the right of "natural growth" of authorized settlements.

Benjamin Netanyahu is a skillful politician but it is probably not in his country's interest to humiliate the United States president by dodging the issues.

Experience shows that a US president can exert decisive influence on the Israeli government if he really wants to. The new US policy, because it is relatively more balanced, undeniably opens up fresh prospects in a situation that seemed totally deadlocked.

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<sup>1</sup> *Le Figaro.fr*, 29 July 2007

<sup>2</sup> See the book by J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007) and its critique by Anti-Defamation League leader Abraham Foxman, whom the rapporteurs met in New York: *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*.



### **C. THE POSSIBILITY OF PEACE**

#### **1. How to help reunify the Palestinian movement**

One of the main stumbling blocks on the road to reconciliation is Israel's and the international community's rejection of all contact with Hamas and refusal to grant it any international aid.

The Western powers would like to help rebuild the Gaza Strip under the Palestinian Authority's exclusive aegis, which Hamas can obviously not accept. At the March 2, 2009 Sharm el-Sheikh summit they agreed to pay \$2.8 billion to rebuild Gaza. But no reconstruction can take place until Israeli lifts its blockade. Imported building materials, spare parts and agricultural inputs are indispensable. In April 2009, four months after the end of hostilities, Gaza imports were at their lowest level since the start of the year despite tremendous humanitarian needs and the cessation of rocket attacks.

The problem is not just humanitarian, although lifting the blockade is imperative from that point of view. It is above all political. Why does Israel refuse to negotiate with a Hamas-led government and why has it talked the United States and Europe into not speaking to Hamas? <sup>1</sup>

Hamas is undoubtedly a terrorist organization and Israel's foe. But one makes peace with one's enemies, not with one's friends. France agreed to speak to the F.L.N. and the British government to the IRA.

A House of Commons report published on August 13, 2007 said "We conclude that the decision not to speak to Hamas in 2007 following the Mecca agreement was counterproductive" and that "the decision to boycott Hamas despite the Mecca agreement and the continued suspension of aid to the national unity government meant that this government was highly likely to collapse".<sup>2</sup> Our British colleagues have just reiterated their recommendation to speak with Hamas moderates in a recent report on the situation in Israel and the occupied territories<sup>3</sup>. In the same vein, former US president Jimmy Carter met "Prime Minister" Ismail Haniyeh on a visit to the Gaza Strip on June 19, 2009.

Let us not be fooled. According to information supplied to the rapporteurs by Turkish officials, the Israelis have secret contacts with Hamas. Forbidding the Europeans and Americans from doing as much would push Hamas into the arms of Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> *The members of the Israeli government, as well as Benjamin Netanyahu, who was then a candidate, refused to meet the rapporteurs during their trip to Israel because they had met Khaled Mechaal in Damascus Only Haim Oron, leader of Meretz, agreed to see them.*

<sup>2</sup> *House of Commons – Foreign Affairs Committee – Global Security ; the Middle East – Eighth Report of Sessions 2006-07; quotes p. 2 (item 3) and p. 28 (item 50).*

<sup>3</sup> *House of Commons – Foreign Affairs Committee – Global Security : Israël and the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Fifth Report of Sessions 2008-09 ; p. 5 (item 12) policy towards Hamas.*

The Quartet's current demands are an obstacle to the formation of a Palestinian unity government. Israel's existence will be implicitly recognized if Hamas participates in a government of national unity that enters into negotiations with it. *De jure* recognition would come at the end of the talks, but between two sovereign entities. Requiring Hamas to recognize Israel beforehand would have only one consequence: preventing the peace process from starting.

The Israelis continue to view Hamas's Charter as proof of an Islamic "worldview" incompatible with Western values and principles, but many researchers<sup>1</sup> have shown that the document is above all a card in Hamas's deck that it will discard when the time comes.

During the 2006 elections Hamas presented an "electoral platform" and, later, a bigger "national unity government program", to situate its position with regard to the 1988 Charter. They stressed "freedom of expression, of the press, of association", "pluralism", "separation of powers", the "peaceful alternation of power", the "construction of a developed civil society" and "respect for the rights of minorities".

If anything is demanded prior to talks with Hamas, it should be the respect of those principles and values in Gaza more than the amendment of a charter a group of hotheaded students wrote over 20 years ago to which Hamas leaders themselves do not seem to attach the slightest importance.

It seems increasingly clear that Abbas is postponing PLO reform until better days. The same goes for the reform of Fatah, which is nevertheless indispensable before the next elections because conservatives and the "young guard", which no longer rules out a return to armed struggle, are pulling it in opposite directions<sup>2</sup>.

The summer of 2009 Fatah congress may have restored Abbas's legitimacy and breathed new life into the movement but did not settle the core issue: reunification of the Palestinian movement.

The Israeli government probably holds the key to Palestinian reunification in the person of a jailed Fatah member whose representativeness is recognized by Hamas: Marwan Barghouti.

According to information the rapporteurs gathered from Barghouti's wife, the lawyer Fadwa Barghouti, his incarceration conditions are harsh, which has not prevented him from being recognized as a leader by all his fellow inmates, who have come out in favor of national unity with him.

The Palestinians would probably close ranks if Barghouti formed a national unity government. To him, reconciliation depends on implementing

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<sup>1</sup> See Paul Delmotte: "Le Hamas et la reconnaissance d'Israël – impasse politique en Palestine" *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *International Herald Tribune* – May 21, 2009: "Fatah struggles with a new guard's call for change".

the “prisoners’ document” all the factions endorsed, which guarantees the protection of democratic principles: pluralism, the separation of powers, civil rights and public freedoms. It proclaims the Palestinian people’s right to resistance and spells out the specific steps for restoring unity: reform of the PLO and of the Palestinian Authority, both organs being mandated to uphold and defend the Palestinian people’s demands in negotiations with Israel. The national unity government alone would be in charge of rebuilding Gaza and holding elections by January 25, 2010.

In those conditions, it is worth considering exchanging Barghouti for Gilad Shalit, especially since, according to his wife Fadwa, he tops the list of prisoners presented to Israel in exchange for the Israeli soldier’s release.

### **Marwan Barghouti**

Barghouti was one of the first Intifada's main political leaders in the Gaza Strip in 1987, when the Israeli army arrested him and expelled him to Jordan. He was unable to return until after the Oslo accords were signed in 1994. Two years later Barghouti was elected to the Palestine Legislative Council, where he defended the need for peace with Israel. A talented speaker who proved himself in combat, Barghouti climbed the rungs of Fatah's political ladder, becoming secretary-general for the West Bank.

Barghouti headed Fatah's armed wing, Tanzim-Fatah, during the second Intifada, when his organizing skills made him indispensable. His popularity rose among the Palestinians. Meanwhile, Tanzim-Fatah launched suicide attacks on Israeli soil and settlements through the intermediary of a group, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

Barghouti's role in suicide attacks against Israel made him one of the Israeli security forces' most wanted Palestinians. In 2001 he foiled an Israeli attempt on his life. Israel captured him on April 15, 2002. A civilian court indicted him on several counts of murder and attempted murder in a terrorist enterprise under his command. Israeli military tribunals usually try Palestinians captured for acts of resistance but for Barghouti Israel had to bow to international pressure and provide a minimum of legal credibility at the trial.

Barghouti used the trial as a soapbox to plead his political cause. Throughout the trial he refused to recognize the Israeli court's legitimacy and, therefore, to defend himself. He said he supported armed attacks against the Israeli occupation but not on civilians within Israel.

On May 20, 2004 the court sentenced Barghouti for five murders, including of a Greek Orthodox monk. It also found him guilty of attempted murder for a suicide attack foiled by the Israeli security forces.

Barghouti pleaded innocent to 21 counts of murder committed during 33 attacks. On June 6 the court sentenced him to five life sentences for five murders and 40 years in prison for attempted murder.

## **2. How can the Israelis be helped to understand that a viable Palestinian State is in their interests?**

Paradoxically, Israel is politically too weak to make peace and militarily too strong to need it. In addition, until now its army and government have enjoyed unconditional backing from the United States.

Israel's security is a legitimate concern and any peace project must include measures to address it. But the current insecurity must be put into perspective and correctly understood. The fact of the matter is that today Israel enjoys a very high level of security and a high standard of living, while the populations of Gaza and the West Bank are living in poverty and insecurity due to the military occupation and settlement activity. The Gaza blockade has dragged on for three years and the checkpoints are still in place, although their number has been recently reduced.

Meanwhile, Palestinian leaders do not seem ready for reconciliation. The gulf between them is wide and it does not look as though they are willing to agree on a negotiations program, especially if recognition of Israel is a prior condition.

In that context Palestinian reconciliation would be a miracle. It will take more than the goodwill of Egyptian officials to get there.

The Western powers bear a big share of the responsibility for this situation. They insisted on free elections, helped organize them, recognized their validity and then, after the results were announced, refused to recognize the government that emerged from the voting. Under pressure from Israel they still refuse to dialogue with Hamas. It is easy to understand the reasons for that attitude, which is nevertheless a mistake that should be corrected.

One thing is clear. Israelis and Palestinians will not make peace without an honest broker capable of restoring a minimum of balance between the parties. For obvious reasons, the United States is the only country capable of meeting that challenge. The European Union can help if it stops bankrolling the Palestinian Authority, which would put the financial burden on Israel as an occupying power.

## II. AVOIDING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Iran is more alarming than ever. The unstable, war-mongering, paranoid, Iranian regime showed its true colors after the obviously rigged presidential elections: an oppressive, theocratic, liberticidal dictatorship. If Iran manages to develop nuclear weapons it will be a nightmare for many nations, and not just Western ones.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad crushed the protests over his re-election, but that does not mean his term will be easy. He must confront much more than the supreme guide's symbolic rebuff: the restlessness of his conservative allies, who criticize his arrogance and scorn for institutions<sup>1</sup>. They did not appreciate the liberties he took with the law and parliament during his first term. The harshest criticism came when Ahmadinejad refused to obey the supreme guide and dismiss Rahim Mashai, whom he had appointed vice-president. During the investiture of his government by parliament, the deputies rejected the appointment of three candidates Ahmadinejad proposed, including two women and one of his personal friends, Mohammad Ali-Abadi. The president's haughty attitude towards the clergy is at the root of the conservatives' anger. Ahmadinejad deeply annoys the clergy, who have been accustomed to having a big share of power since the 1979 Revolution. He has appointed close associates—usually former Revolutionary Guards—to key posts in the interior and oil ministries and the intelligence services. Many conservatives wonder whether his policies will compromise the Islamic Republic's future.

Ahmadinejad appears to be increasingly alone in the face of criticism from some conservatives, parliament, the judicial branch of government, the Discernment Council (an arbitral institution chaired by Rafsandjani) and even his own allies, who have been pushed into the arms of the opposition one after another. It seems his only solution will be to rely even more on Ayatollah Khamenei, but he is starting to distance himself from the president, in particular by saying on August 26 that there was no proof of any supposed ties between Ahmadinejad's political rivals and certain foreign countries. In another sign, as soon as Ahmadinejad dismissed intelligence minister Qolam Hussein Mohseni Ejei on July 25, the head of the judicial system, who was himself appointed by the Supreme Guide, named him general prosecutor.

The Islamic Republic has always had several centers of power, but never to this extent. It is unclear whether Ahmadinejad will be in a position to conduct national and international policies that would impose further sacrifices on the Iranian people. That is why it is necessary to understand his

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<sup>1</sup> See "Ahmadinejad et les conservateurs: les raisons de la colère" by Hossein Bastani, former secretary-general of the Iranian journalists' union exiled in France and editor-in-chief of the *Roozonline.com* information site. See also the special issue on Iran of the journal *Moyen-Orient*, number one, August-September 2009.

foreign policy and nuclear program's stage of development before considering what line to take. An analysis based on a historical perspective can help<sup>1</sup>.

### **A. IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY: BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND NATIONALISM**

According to Iran's constitution the Supreme Guide is the guide of the "Islamic" Revolution, not the "Iranian" Revolution. Iran's critics see that as a desire to export its revolution throughout the Middle East to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon with Hezbollah, Palestine with Hamas and even the remotest parts of Yemen, where the government is said to be aiding the Houti rebellion.

Ahmadinejad's belligerent speeches, saber-rattling attitude and hotheaded outbursts should be taken seriously. There are reasons to consider Iran alarming. True, it has reasons to distrust foreign powers, from the Anglo-American coup that ousted Mossadegh to the UN Security Council's refusal to condemn the Iraqi invasion, which Western countries and all the Arab governments supported. Those memories undoubtedly fuel Iran's prickly nationalism.

Iran's foreign policy has wavered between nationalism and spreading the Revolution.

#### **1. "Islamic" foreign policy and its failure: 1979-1989**

##### *a) Policy early in the Revolution*

The Islamic Republic of Iran's founding act was the occupation of the US embassy in Teheran in late 1979 and the breaking of diplomatic ties with Washington in April 1980. That radical event defined its foreign policy, which is based on three parts.

First, Iran's desire to display **solidarity with all the world's Muslims** led the regime to gloss over its Shiite specificity. The goal of its pan-Islamic policy was to rebuild the community of believers (*umma*) around Iran, the rallying point for the Muslim peoples' struggle against the West and Israel.

Iran's foreign policy also had a **Third World dimension**, which was probably based on Ali Shariati's vision of an "Islamic liberation theology" according to which the world was divided into two camps: the have-nots (*mostazafin*), which included Muslims, and the imperialist oppressors (*mostakberin*). That led Iran to support Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua while opposing Afghanistan's reactionary Sunni mujahideen.

The third element was **virulent anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism** prolonging the struggle against the United States' ally, the Shah. Not only did

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<sup>1</sup> The following text owes much to Thierry Coville's *Iran la Révolution invisible*, Paris Ed. La Découverte – April 2007 and to Bernard Hourcade, former director of the Institut français de recherche en Iran, both of whom were interviewed by the mission.

the United States help to bring down Mossadegh, but it also gave Reza Shah massive economic and, especially, military aid. Anti-Zionism served the ambitions of Iran's leaders, who wanted to appear as the Muslim world's leaders. Tensions with the Western powers, in particular the United States, helped maintain a revolutionary climate and strengthen the regime's legitimacy. Internal political struggles have influenced Iran's foreign policy from the start, according to Thierry Coville<sup>1</sup>.

The Council of the Islamic Revolution was set up to coordinate and ideologically and financially support Islamic or national movements fighting against the Western powers or "corrupt" Muslim governments. In 1981 Iranian-backed Shiite groups staged an attempted uprising in Bahrain. Several terrorist attacks rocked Kuwait. Iranian agents and Saudi police forces clashed during pilgrimages to Mecca. The Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution led by the *hodjatoleslam* Muhammad Bakir al-Hakim organized several attacks against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Iran also aided the PLO, Hamas and anti-Russian Shiite resistance groups in Afghanistan.

Iran's most determined action was in Lebanon. In 1982 Hossein Mussavi, the former head of Amal, a Lebanese Shiite formation created in the 1970s, allied with Iran and founded the Islamic Amal Movement, better known as Islamic Jihad. The same year saw the emergence of Hezbollah led by Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadhlallah, who founded Iraq's Shiite party Daawa. The two movements were behind many actions against Western interests in Lebanon, in particular the 1983 US Embassy bombing in Beirut and two suicide attacks on French and US forces based in Lebanon that left 58 and 239 people dead, respectively. When Western troops left Lebanon, Amal and Hezbollah started taking Western hostages.

France was specially targeted because of it was present in Lebanon, supported Iraq and granted asylum to many Iranian dissidents, including the People's Mujahideen. In 1985 Islamic Jihad kidnapped sociologist Michel Seurat, who died in captivity. In 1986 several bombs exploded in Paris. The French police sought to question Iranian translator Wahid Gorji, who had diplomatic status, setting off an "embassy war".

Hezbollah gradually became a major player in Lebanon. From 1985 to 1987 its growing influence led to armed clashes with the country's other Shiite movement, Amal, which was alarmed at seeing its influence dwindle. Hezbollah's emergence and rise was the greatest success of Iran's policy of exporting the Revolution but failed to mask its overall failure.

#### *b) The failure to export the Revolution*

Iran did not succeed in bringing about Islamic republics anywhere, not even Lebanon, and never became the leader of a revolutionary movement outside its borders. On the contrary, many Islamic countries and movements,

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<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 197

especially if they were Sunni, turned away from Iran, alarmed at its subversive activities.

The war with Iraq was a major factor in that failure because the Iranian regime glorified nationalistic values after Saddam Hussein's attack. A whole generation of militants received military and ideological training. The cult of martyrdom, patterned after Imam Hossieyn's tragic fate, became a key part of official ideology, accentuating Iran's Shiite identity compared to its Sunni neighbors.

Moreover, Iran always cared about defending its national interests and did not hesitate to occasionally make deals with the United States and even Israel, as the events leading up to the Irangate scandal proved in 1986. Despite its proclaimed desire to gather all Muslims together in a global liberation struggle, Teheran did not blink an eye when Syria massacred thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members during clashes in Hamat in 1982. And Iran did nothing to keep Saddam Hussein from slaughtering Shiites during the Gulf War.

Each time, Iran looked out for its own interests, discouraging Sunni movements from supporting Teheran's Muslim internationalist discourse. Iran's only Sunni ally is Syria, but the alliance has no ideological content. The Syrian regime backed Iran against Iraq because Saddam Hussein had always been its sworn enemy and the Iranian alliance facilitates its control over Lebanon. It is no surprise, then, that Iran proved incapable of creating and leading a revolutionary Islamic movement in the Middle East and, on the contrary, found itself isolated on the international scene. The most striking example of its failure was the Muslim world's silence during the Iran-Iraq War. Despite support from Iran the PLO eventually sided with Saddam Hussein, which Teheran never forgave.

Even Shiites have not always been loyal to Iran. For example, in the 1980s Hezbollah's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Fadlallah, expressed reservations about the idea of *velayat-e faqih*<sup>1</sup> and acknowledged the impossibility of imposing an Islamic regime on a multiconfessional State such as Lebanon.

## **2. The return to nationalism and a regional power policy, 1989-2001**

The failure of the policy of exporting the Revolution, whose only result was to isolate Iran, combined with the cost of the long war with Iraq, led Iran's leaders to focus on consolidating the regime and meeting the population's material aspirations.

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, "the government of jurisconsult", all the principles underpinning the idea that the supreme guide must be a clergyman.



The presidencies of the most moderate ayatollahs, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani (1989–1997) and Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), were marked by pragmatic foreign policies tending to strengthen Iran's regional role.

After the USSR collapsed Iran tried to forge close ties with Central Asia's new republics devoid of any Islamic connotation.

During the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and clashes between Tajikistan's government and the country's Islamic movement, Iran sought to promote understanding and cooperation instead of stoking the flames of Islamic revolution.

Teheran has focused on defending its economic and strategic interests with post-communist Russia: purchase of Russian arms, construction of the Bushehr power plant and building an oil pipeline through the Caspian Sea area.

The fact that Turkey is a Sunni country, allied with the United States, close to Israel and attached to the secular institutions set up by Kemal Ataturk has not kept it from maintaining close ties with Iran, especially since both governments show the same determination in opposing Kurdistan's independence movements. The same pragmatism has prevailed in Iran's relations with the oil-producing Gulf States and, after an initial period of tension, Saudi Arabia. However, its relations with the United Arab Emirates remain marred by the dispute over the Tomb and Abu Moussa Islands, which Teheran occupied during the time of Shah and which the Islamic Republic has never handed over.

During that period Iran tried to normalize its relations with Iraq, exchanging prisoners and developing trade in violation of UN sanctions. Iraq exported more oil and imported more goods than it was allowed to.

Iran's extremely cautious attitude towards Europe during the 1991 Gulf War (condemnation of the coalition's offensive but no interference with the military operations) led to the lifting of economic sanctions and the start of a critical dialogue between the West and Iran that had several goals, including respect for human rights, renunciation of terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and repeal of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie. The dialogue nurtured the growth of economic relations between Europe and Iran. Total, associated with Russia's Gazprom and Malaysia's Petronas, has invested several billion dollars in Iran's oil and gas industry despite the US embargo.

Relations with the United States have not improved since the Revolution even though Iran had definitively abandoned the use of terrorism by the late 1980s and dismantled most of its terrorist networks in 1989 when the pasdarans in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley went to Sudan. What's more, President Rafsandjani encouraged Hezbollah's metamorphosis into a political organization. That orientation did not keep Iran from assassinating several opponents abroad, including Shapur Bakhtiar, the Shah's last prime minister,

in Suresnes, France, where he was living in exile. By laying the groundwork for Iran's nuclear program, Rafsandjani was not pursuing aggressive aims. The fight against Israel was limited to support for Hamas and Hezbollah. Khatami's policy was not significantly different from Rafsandjani's and continued its main lines. The US government had a good perception of his speech at the United Nations and reassuring personality. During a 1998 CNN interview he condemned terrorism and indicated that Iran did not seek to impose its point of view on the Palestinians concerning the peace process or to become a nuclear power. Reacting favorably to the reformers' electoral victory, Madeleine Albright announced the partial lifting of the embargo on US imports of carpets and food products. The gestures stopped short of opening up a dialogue with Washington, which continued to come up against support for Hezbollah, considered by Iran as an asset it could not afford to give up.

### **3. Iran after September 11, 2001**

The September 11 attacks suddenly changed Iran's environment.

First, Iran's biggest two regional adversaries, the Taliban in the east and Saddam Hussein in the west, were ousted. A huge gap separated the Sunni fundamentalist Afghan Taliban and the Iranian Shiites, and Saddam Hussein had never ceased being the Iranian regime's main enemy.

Despite its official opposition to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian government observed benevolent neutrality towards the United States, even offering to rescue American pilots found on Iranian soil. During the conflict Iran aided the forces of Ismael Kahn, the former governor of Herat province, in the fight against the Taliban. Lastly, Iran played an important part at the late 2001 Bonn conference that presided over the formation of the Afghan government.

Nevertheless, even though Iran had nothing to do with the September 11 attacks and actually adopted a cooperative attitude, George W. Bush called it part of the "axis of evil" in his January 29, 2002 State of the Union address. Afterwards, Washington conducted a systematically hostile policy, describing Iran as a threat to the world and even going so far as to call for "regime change" because of its support for "international terrorism", in this case Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Iran perceived the White House rhetoric, combined with the US military presence on its borders, as existential threats. That might explain the resumption or pursuit of a clandestine nuclear program intended to make the country safe from attack with atomic weapons.

#### 4. Ahmadinejad's verbal extremism

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad rose through the ranks of the conservative, religious Islamic right. A member of the pasdarans, he is a perfect example of the "Islamic engineers" who made a name for themselves in other fundamentalist movements. Ahmadinejad was elected mayor of Teheran in 2003 and portrayed himself as the leader of a second revolution aiming to stamp out corruption and Western values. He challenged President Khatami's liberal reforms and stands up for the "have-nots". His power base is the *basidj*, the pasdarans' strong-armed auxiliary militia.

Ahmadinejad ran for president in June 2005 and surprised everybody by coming in second with 19.4% of the votes behind former president Hashemi Rafsandjani, who only won 21.1%. On 24 June he handily won the second round with 61.69% of the votes compared to 35.93% for Rafsandjani.

In an October 2005 speech on Israel Ahmadinejad said he agreed with Ayatollah Khomeiny's comment that "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time".

After cartoons of Mohammed were published in December 2005 Ahmadinejad denounced the "myth of the massacre of the Jews" and suggested creating a Jewish State in Europe, the United States or Canada. He cast doubt on the reality of the Shoah, called Israel a "tumor" and asked Germany and Austria to give up part of their land to create a new State of Israel.

Ahmadinejad's fiery statements met with widespread disapproval in the West and contributed to the deterioration of Iran's image there. The European countries were tempted to join the US position that it was impossible to negotiate with the Iranian regime, which had become a threat. That view is shared by a number of Gulf States, which, worried about Iran's ambitions and the Sunnis' decline in Iraq, denounce, in the words of Jordan's King Abdallah II, the emergence of a "**Shiite crescent**".

Two factors temper Iran's apparent return to a policy of Islamic expansionism.

First, the Supreme Guide, not the president, is in charge of foreign policy. Since coming to power in 1989 Ali Khamenei has set a pragmatic course and made defense of Iran's national interests the priority.

Second, anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic statements did not start with Ahmadinejad. They have been unfortunately frequent since the Revolution and do not mean Iran is preparing for a military confrontation with Israel, in which it does not have the means to prevail in any case. Ahmadinejad's goal is to curry favor with the "Arab street" and portray himself as the Arab cause's most hardcore defender.

Iran still has a limited audience in the Arab world. Salafist-inspired movements like Al Qaeda have nothing but contempt for Iran, Shiism's

standard-bearer in the Middle East. Sunni governments, especially in the Gulf, look askance at Iran's rising power. Only Syria remains faithful to Teheran, because of its role as an effective counterweight to the United States and a useful ally in Lebanon.

In short, Ahmadinejad's outrageous outbursts please Arab public opinion without really alarming the region's Sunni governments.

### **5. Mir Hossein Moussavi's victory**

It is highly unlikely that Mir Hossein Moussavi's has victory really changed the course of Iranian policy. Western observers thought his vigorous opposition to Ahmadinejad might usher in a shift in direction and an opening of constructive dialogue with the West. Nothing could be less certain.

Moussavi had been the Party of the Islamic Republic's political director and an effective artisan of Imam Khomeiny's rise to power. He briefly served as foreign minister during the 1980 US hostage crisis before becoming prime minister during the Iran-Iraq War from 1981 to 1989, when he was known as a hawk and advocated exporting the Revolution.

During the electoral campaign he came out in favor of continuing Iran's nuclear program, which is not surprising given that, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), he approved the first secret purchases of centrifuges in March 1987.

### ***B. IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITION***

Iran's policy is now resolutely nationalist. The Islamic Republic intends to dissuade any foe from attacking it and to oppose foreign interference. Iran has developed a multi-pronged strategy to defend itself.

It has strengthened its coastal defenses, which are based in the mountains bordering the Persian Gulf and would make any landing attempt by sea risky and costly in human lives.

Iran has boosted its ability to withstand a possible attack by doubling its communication networks and spreading its military means throughout its territory.

It has acquired the means to extend a possible conflict to other countries with the aim of giving a possible retaliation a wider scope. In addition to its allies in Lebanon and Palestine, it has light, swift craft that can hinder if not interrupt tanker traffic in the Gulf.

Iran has developed a national military industry and its engineers have done all they can to keep the equipment inherited from the Shah, especially aircraft, in proper working order. It has sought to diversify its arms imports, in particular by buying them from Russia. Despite Russia's constant denials, Iran

is suspected of acquiring S-300 missiles, the latest-generation anti-air defense system.

It would make sense for Iran to develop nuclear weapons in order to round out its defenses, guarantee its independence and back up its policy as a regional power.

### **1. Iran's nuclear program**

Much has been said and written about Iran's nuclear program. The issue is essential.

#### *a) A civilian or military program?*

Iran's officials constantly deny that the country has any intention of developing nuclear weapons, a position defended by Seyed Mehdi Miraboutalebi, the Iranian ambassador in Paris<sup>1</sup>.

**However, although no formal proof makes it possible to assert that Iran is developing a military nuclear program, some clues indicate that it is.**

**The first clue is that Iran is pursuing its nuclear activities in utmost secrecy, breaching its commitments to the non-proliferation treaty (NPT), and Iranian officials still refuse to give the IAEA information that would confirm or disprove whether its nuclear program has a military purpose.**

In August 2002 the People's Mujahideen—determined, clandestine, left-wing opponents of the regime—disclosed the existence of a **huge uranium enrichment plant in Natanz** and the building of a **heavy water reactor in Arak capable of producing plutonium** that could be used to make a nuclear weapon. **Why would Iran try to conceal its nuclear program if it had a peaceful purpose?**

European pressure led Iran to sign the NPT additional protocol allowing the IAEA to visit its nuclear sites without warning. In December 2003 the Iranian regime agreed to temporarily halt its enrichment activity. In return the European Union agreed to continue talks in the framework of its trade and cooperation agreement with Iran and to endorse its membership in the World Trade Organization. Iran was supposed to stop its enrichment activities until the conclusion of a definitive agreement but after Ahmadinejad's election decided to restart the Natanz plant and to stop applying the additional protocol, which in any case it had not ratified.

In 2006 the IAEA found traces of 36% enriched uranium from Iranian centrifuges, Pakistani blueprints and parts of a Pak 2 centrifuge, prompting it

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<sup>1</sup> See the official letter Iran's ambassador in France sent to the President of the Senate on 26 May 2009 in appendix 9.

to ask questions about the Iranian program's true nature, which Teheran never answered.

The "European troika" (Great Britain, France and Germany) and the United States submitted the matter to the United Nations Security Council, which issued six resolutions enjoining Iran to immediately take measures prescribed by the IAEA Board of Governors in February 2006.

Three years later the IAEA is still waiting. According to its June 5, 2009 report (GOV/2009/35), "there remain a number of outstanding issues which give rise to concerns, and which need to be clarified to exclude the existence of possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programmed. As indicated in those reports, for the Agency to be able to address these concerns and make progress in its efforts to provide assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, it is essential that Iran, inter alia, implement the Additional Protocol and provide the information and access requested by the Agency. The Agency has still not received a positive reply from Iran in connection with the Agency's requests for access to relevant information, documentation, locations or individuals."

**Second, Iran has no nuclear power plant likely to use the uranium enriched at Natanz.** The only nuclear power plant that will soon be in a condition to operate is in Bushehr on the Persian Gulf, which should be up and running by October 2009. Russian engineers have rebuilt this plant, which was originally German. It can only use fuel based on Russian standards, which excludes the uranium enriched in Natanz.

Assuming Iran has civilian nuclear power plants capable of using the uranium enriched in Natanz, it would take approximately 10 years with 50,000 IR-1 centrifuges operating there to produce the amount of enriched uranium necessary to "load" the core of a single reactor. That period could be reduced if the most efficient centrifuges being developed in Iran were installed and the 50,000 centrifuges that Natanz was designed to house were operating at full capacity. But right now just 4,592 centrifuges have been installed and are operating; 3,716 more have been installed but are not yet running<sup>1</sup>. With 8,300 IR-1 centrifuges it would take approximately 50 years to produce the amount of enriched uranium necessary for a civilian reactor.

Clearly, the Natanz plant fulfills no economic or technical purpose, especially since it would be 10 times less expensive to buy the fuel necessary from Russia (Rosatom) or France (Areva).

At this stage, then, Iran's nuclear program appears to have no civilian usefulness, if not to ensure the start of a self-sufficient supply of enriched uranium, regardless of the additional cost for the nuclear plants that remain to be built. In any case that would require the qualification of the corresponding fuel to be used in civilian nuclear power plants.

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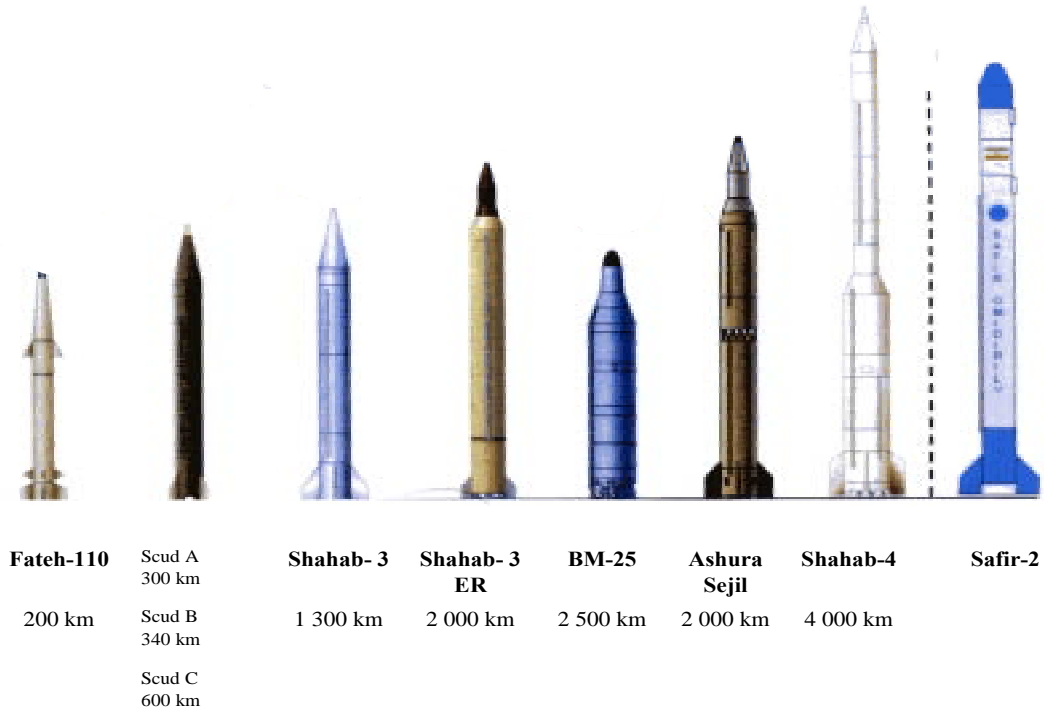
<sup>1</sup> IAEA director-general's report to the board of governors on 28 August 2009.

**The last clue is Iran's progress in the area of ballistic missiles.**

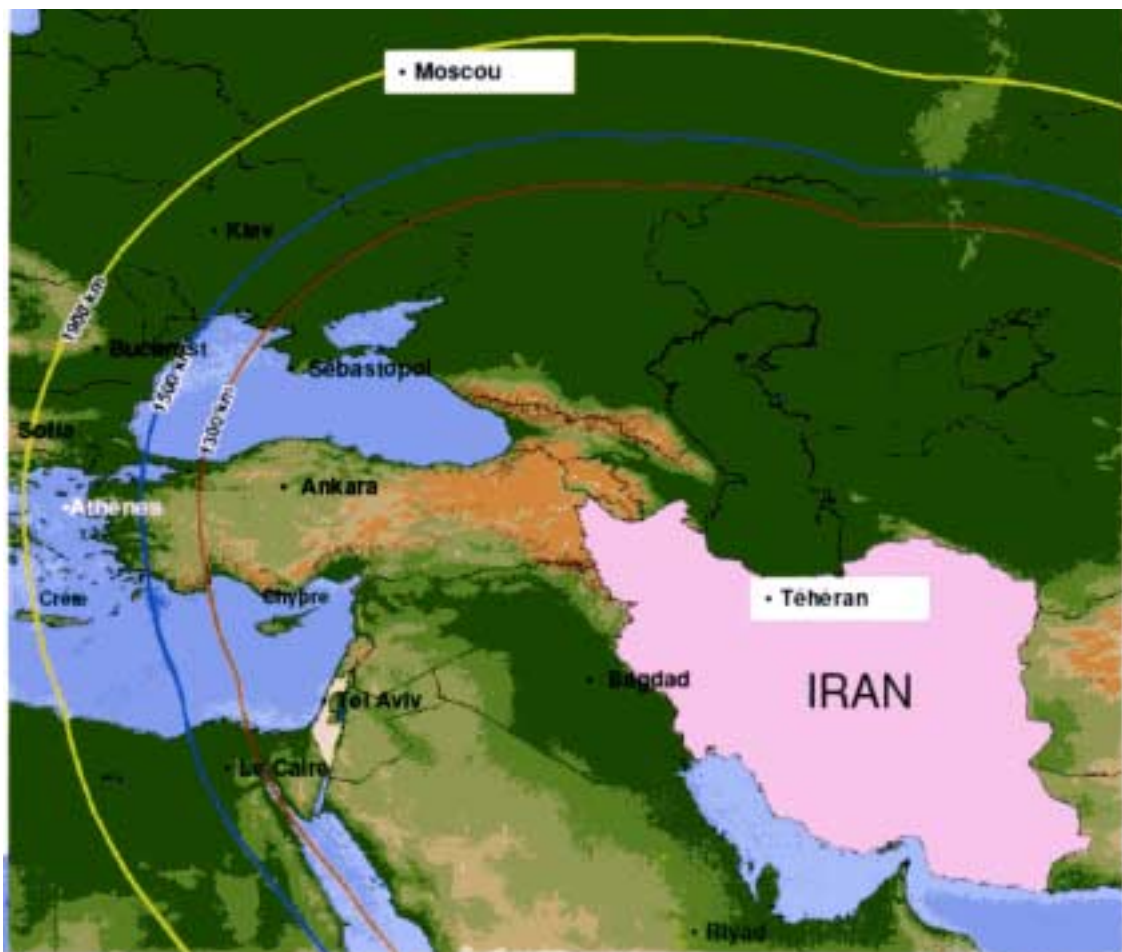
On February 2, 2009 Iran successfully fired its latest-generation space launcher, the Safir-2. It put the Omid satellite into orbit at an apogee of 258 kilometers, proving the Islamic Republic's ability to master ballistic missile technology and reach any State in the Middle East. On May 20, 2009 President Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had successfully tested a Sejil-2 missile, which has a 1,900-kilometer range.

**IRAN'S BALLISTIC AND SPACE ARSENAL**

**IRAN : ARSENAL BALISTIQUE ET SPATIAL**



### AREAS LOCATED WITHIN THE RANGE OF IRAN'S PRESENT BALLISTIC MISSILES



The convergence between enrichment activities and progress in advanced ballistic technology suggests that Iran has a military nuclear program.

*b) A nuclear weapon in how much time?*

This is an essential but complex question. What steps must Iran clear to make nuclear weapons?

#### General concepts about nuclear weapons

Two methods can be used to make a first-generation, “rustic” nuclear weapon able to produce a nuclear fission explosion (A-bomb). The one chosen has an influence on the amount of material to assemble, the complexity of the nuclear formula to design and implement and the necessity of whether or not to perform tests.

**The simple, “gun type” method** consists of assembling two sub-critical masses of fissile material in order to reach the critical mass and set off the nuclear explosion by the simple action of a neutron flow. This method requires a significant amount of fissile material: approximately 50kg of highly enriched (in other words at a rate of 90%) U235 uranium (HEU). The 15kT bomb used on Hiroshima was based on this method.



**The more complex implosion method** consists of using a chemical explosive to densify the initially sub-critical fissile material in order to reach the critical mass by implosion and trigger the nuclear reaction. This method can be used with less fissile material: approximately 25kg of HEU, according to the IAEA. The approximately 21kT bomb dropped on Nagasaki was made using this method, but with plutonium 239 instead of uranium.

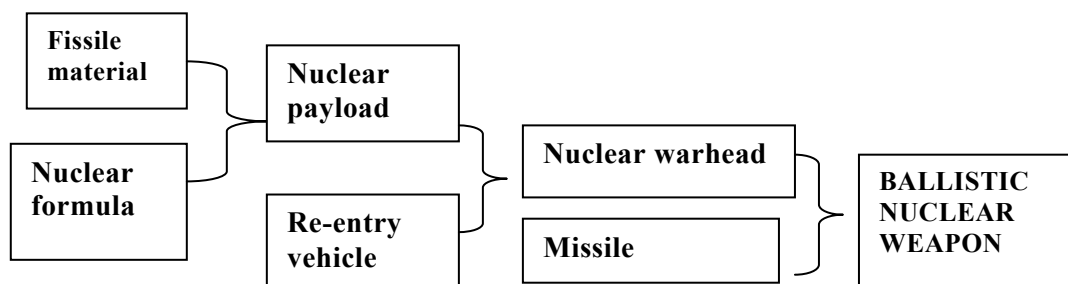
Whatever method is used, the production of a first-generation nuclear warhead requires command of four key steps:

**1/ The availability of fissile material:** if a uranium bomb is made, the HEU production process involves several steps from the mining of the ore until its transformation into metal in order to make a nuclear payload. The most critical phase is isotopic enrichment, for which several processes exist. Today the preferred process for enriching natural uranium (0.71% in U235) is gaseous ultracentrifugation using uranium hexafluoride (UF6). Civilian energy-producing applications require an enrichment rate of up to 5%; the NPT allows an enrichment rate of up to 20% for research reactors. Plutonium does not lend itself to use in a gun-type weapon and can only be used in an implosion system.

**2/ The development of a reliable nuclear payload** (or “nuclear device”) requires mastering the payload’s critical operating stages (detonating the chemical explosive and triggering the neutron flow to set off the fission reaction) and producing sub-assemblies (explosive and fissile material). Together they make up what experts call a nuclear formula, which can be acquired from proliferating networks. The operational use of a gun-type payload can be envisaged without prior validation experimentation. A validation test did not precede the use of the enriched-uranium “Little Boy” bomb on Hiroshima. However, a prior experimental validation is necessary if an implosion weapon is used; that was the case with the “Fat Man” bomb dropped on Nagasaki, which was tested beforehand in the Trinity experiment in the New Mexico desert. Moreover the nuclear safety and security systems taken by a proliferating State acceding to nuclear weapons can be less strict than for a State that already has one.

**3/ The militarization of the payload and its integration into a reentry vehicle** (both of them forming, with related equipment, a nuclear warhead) must meet several parameters: respect of the mass and volume required for the nuclear warhead in order to ensure the missile’s performances, maintenance of the thermal and mechanical conditions acceptable by the nuclear payload when it is carried in the missile and during the warhead’s trajectory towards the target. Warhead-missile compatibility can be demonstrated at the same time the warhead is developed and during the missile development stage. However, a proliferating State might wish to skip the militarization and integration stage by dropping the bomb with an airplane instead of having missile carry it.

The fourth step is **installing the warhead on a missile** in order to obtain a ballistic nuclear weapon. This step can be illustrated in a simplified way:



Obtaining a ballistic nuclear weapon is still enough to have a coherent dissuasion force. It is necessary to have several weapons capable of penetrating enemy defenses integrated into an appropriate weapons system (protected launch sites, radars, etc.)

## 1. Production of fissile material

A country pursuing military aims could consider taking the following steps, in which ultracentrifugation is used, to produce weapons-grade enriched uranium:

- step one, enrichment to 5%, the limit for civil-industrial purposes, can be done at the Natanz site;

- step two, enrichment to 20% (authorized by the NPT for research reactors) can also be done at Natanz or another, much smaller site; Natanz is the only site that has been declared thus far.

Highly enriched uranium can be produced in one or two steps, either at a smaller undeclared site with approximately 1,000 IR1 centrifuges or at the Natanz site. Iran is therefore in a position of conflict with the IAEA and the international community.

The fact that only the first type of plant has been declared makes it impossible to conclude whether or not others exist. Given their small sizes, they can be hidden at the Natanz site itself or one of the country's possible facilities elsewhere.

The **Arak reactor, under construction**, is apparently adapted to plutonium production, but starting the reactor up is not conceivable before several years. By then Iran is likely to have a reprocessing facility to extract plutonium from irradiated fuel. No such facility in Iran is known so far. The Bushehr nuclear power plant, which the Russians are currently building, should be up and running in 2010. **However, this pressurized light water reactor, which the IAEA is monitoring, seems poorly adapted to the production of weapons-grade plutonium.**

## 2. The availability of sufficient amounts of fissile material

In early 2009 Iran produced a metric ton of UF<sub>6</sub> including approximately 700kg of 3.5%- enriched-uranium. In August 1,430kg were obtained. It takes 1.6 metric ton of UF<sub>6</sub> 3.5%-enriched-uranium to obtain 25kg of 90%-enriched-uranium, the amount the IAEA deems necessary to make a first-generation implosion nuclear payload. Iran can therefore be considered close to having completed the first enrichment stage if its goal is military.

To carry out the later steps, according to the information available to the rapporteurs it can be said that if the program unfolded in the best possible conditions (with a low centrifuge breakdown rate) Iran could have enough highly enriched uranium by approximately summer 2010, if it has already built the plants required for the other steps.

Iran has no know facility capable of producing plutonium.

### 3. The development and vectorization of a nuclear payload

When Iran will have produced enough highly enriched uranium plutonium to make an implosion nuclear device (25kg) and mastered the detonation technology (which seems likely), it will take just a few months to have a nuclear payload, in other words by late 2010.

The next step, after a nuclear test and a demonstration of its nuclear capability, would be for Iran to vectorize the payload, integrating it into a ballistic missile, which the Islamic Republic might prefer to making an airborne bomb, considering the defense systems it would have to penetrate.

The transition stage from nuclear payload to vectorized nuclear warhead could take place at the same time as the development of a missile and require anywhere from a few months to several years, depending on how much knowledge Iran has acquired in this area.

**The study the mission carried out convinced it that if Iran achieved the best results when carrying out all the steps the country could have a first-generation nuclear weapon within 18 months, in other words by late 2010. It would be a single device that would not have been tested and whose adaptation to a ballistic missile would not have been demonstrated.**

**Iran would not be in a position to prove its command of the weapon and could therefore not use it to dissuade possible enemies.** It would need at least two weapons, which would take at least another year and a half to build; in other words it would not be ready until 2011-2012.

In addition, it would be necessary for Iran to have:

- already built the secret plants necessary to produce HEU or reconfigured the Natanz site without the IAEA's knowledge;
- and developed, at the same time, all the technology required to militarize the device.

**Such a scenario seems highly unlikely.**

**However, if Iran seeks to acquire a nuclear arsenal, even if it is small but capable of dissuading a possible aggressor, it seems, after consultation with several French experts, that it could probably cross that threshold by around 2015.**

That estimate differs little from other known studies on the issue. In its 2008 report the British House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee said that Iran could produce enough HEU for a weapon by late 2009 at the earliest, but that is highly unlikely. The report said Iran would be technically capable of making enough HEU between 2010 and 2015."

**The rapporteurs therefore conclude that:**

- **at the present time nothing makes it possible to prove or disprove that Iran has a military nuclear program;**

- **but there are good reasons to believe it does have that goal,** including the program's secret character at the beginning, impossibility for the IAEA to make the inspections it deems necessary, very low economic and technical rationality of the program under way if it is intended for peaceful purposes, convergence between command of uranium enrichment and long-range ballistic missile technologies;

- **if Iran were pursuing a military option, it would be in a position, in the best of cases, to have its first nuclear device by late 2010 and a coherent dissuasion system by around 2015.**

**2. What dangers would Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon present?**

*a) An Israeli attack on nuclear sites*

In theory a nuclear Iran would not be a serious threat to Europe or the United States, but it would be for Israel. Considering its size, a single nuclear weapon could endanger the Jewish State's future. Its leaders understandably refuse to take the slightest risk and believe that the preventive destruction of Iran's military nuclear capability is necessary, just as it was for Iraq's capabilities in 1982 and Syria's in 2007.

Statements by Iran's leaders only strengthen the perception of that threat. In 1980 Ayatollah Khomeini is reported to have said, "We do not worship Iran, we worship Allah. Patriotism is the mask of paganism. I tell you: this country can burn. I tell you: this country can go up in smoke, as long as Islam comes out triumphant in the rest of the world."<sup>1</sup> It took 500,000 Iranian dead for Khomeini to stop the war with Iraq, which could have been ended much sooner. Ayatollah Khamenei received his religious education at the Mashad seminary, where teachers offer esoteric interpretations of the holy texts and teach that reason and faith are incompatible. President Ahmadinejad has been influenced by the messianism of Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi Mezbah Yazdi. Even speeches by Iranian leaders reputed to be pragmatic raise questions. Hashemi Rafsandjani's statement, "the use of a single nuclear weapon against Israel would lay waste to everything in that land (of Israel) but cause only limited damage to the Muslim world"<sup>2</sup> prompts mistrust.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Bruno Tertrais quoted in Norman Podohoretz; "The case for bombing Iran", Commentary, June 2007. The veracity of this quote, originally published by the expert Amir Taheri in his book *Nest of Spies, is disputable* ("Is Iran suicidal ordeterrable?" *Economist.com*, 14 November 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Amir Taheri: "Recipe for disaster" - The National Review, 14 November 2003

Many Iran experts believe that the Islamic Republic's leaders, whatever they say, are cautious and do not want war. Nevertheless, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would probably be a blow to stability.

In that context, an attack by Israel's armed forces is not unlikely. Could they do it alone or would they need help from the United States?

A recent study by the American think tank CSIS sheds interesting light on this issue, which the rapporteurs compared with their own investigations<sup>1</sup>.

A nuanced response is necessary. Israel's air force may not have the capability to destroy deeply buried sites such as Natanz<sup>2</sup> beyond the shadow of a doubt, but alone they could, at the cost of significant casualties, destroy Natanz or seriously damage two or three sites such as Natanz, Arak and Isfahan.

It is nearly certain that Israel does not have the means to destroy all the sites involved in Iran's nuclear program in a single raid: there are too many of them and they are too well protected.

**Such an attack would delay Iran's program for several years but not stop it.** Because the program is military, one or more hidden sites probably exist. In any case, Iranian engineers' technological know-how could not be destroyed.

Teheran could unleash many punishing reprisals: blockading the Straits of Hormuz, attacking certain Gulf States, launching Hezbollah and Hamas offensives, firing conventional ballistic missiles into Israel, etc. However, Iran might limit its retaliation to avoid giving the United States a motive to intervene.

An Israeli attack would probably cause Iran to drop out of the non-proliferation treaty, whose goal is to convince countries to give up nuclear weapons by facilitating access to civilian nuclear power. But the treaty has been in serious trouble since India, Pakistan and Israel have shown that by refusing to sign it they have been able to develop nuclear weapons and avoid the IAEA's control.

#### *b) Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and the end of the NPT*

Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would almost certainly set off a nuclear arms race in the region. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria would try and follow Iran's example. Further afield, Turkey and Algeria might start or resume military nuclear activities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Study on a Possible Israeli Strike on Iran's Nuclear Development Facilities - Abdullah Toukan, Senior Associate and Anthony H. Cordesman 14 March 2009*

<sup>2</sup> *In this case American GBU-28 bunker-busting bombs.*

**Saudi Arabia**, which is often diplomatically at odds with Iran, would react. The prestige Iran would win in the Muslim world from possessing nuclear weapons would surely prompt Saudi Arabia to follow suit and cross that strategic threshold. Right now the country only has limited nuclear facilities: the Atomic Energy Research Institute created in 1988 and the nuclear engineering department at King Abdul Aziz University founded in 1977. Saudi Arabia also has four laboratories that could contribute to a weapons-grade plutonium production program. In 1988 it purchased a significant number of Chinese CSS-2 missiles that can carry a payload of over two metric tons each. The quickest and most effective option would be to conclude an alliance with Pakistan. In 2003 Pakistani officials openly mentioned the possibility of setting up a mechanism similar to NATO with Saudi Arabia in the nuclear arena. Some experts<sup>1</sup> say the two countries are in a state of advanced dialogue and that Pakistani officials may grant Saudi Arabia a security guarantee.

**Egypt** probably has the region's most advanced nuclear infrastructure and experience. It possesses two research reactors as well as, since 1998, two fuel-producing facilities. The Inshas research center is reported to have conducted many undeclared experiments that could be used to develop a military program. In addition, Cairo and Tripoli are said to have cooperated in this area until the Libyan program ended in 2003. Egypt has laid the groundwork for a military nuclear program and its ore reserves would probably give it a certain degree of autonomy. In 1998 President Hosni Mubarak said, "when the time comes, if we need nuclear weapons we will not hesitate". If Iran acquires nuclear weapons it is likely that Egypt "will not hesitate". Egypt views Iran as a threat and has been worried since Hamas took control of Gaza that it will increase its influence on its borders. The enmity between them has never been a secret: they do not have diplomatic relations and the Iranian government has just authorized a movie glorifying Anwar al-Sadat's assassins. Saudi nuclear capability would have similar effects and it can be safely assumed that Egypt would not like to be seen as a laggard in the Arab world: its national pride would be at stake. However, Egypt's finances do not leave the country with a wide margin of maneuver, unless it obtains financial aid from the Gulf Emirates.

**Syria** has an embryonic nuclear program. The two research centers near Damascus are not very technically advanced. However, the country has big phosphate deposits suitable for large-scale uranium mining and built a facility for that purpose that has been operational since 1996. The discovery of the Al Kibar reactor near Dayr az Zawr surprised most analysts. In April 2008 the US administration presented to Congress and the press documents showing that the site Israeli aviation destroyed in September 2007 was a nuclear reactor built with help from North Korea.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bruno Tertrais's report on the strategic consequences of Iran's possible access to nuclear weapons, Paris, October 23, 2003 *Fondation pour la recherche stratégique*.

**If Iran acquired nuclear weapons, nuclear proliferation throughout the Middle East would be a likely scenario spelling the end of the NPT.**

The United States and its European allies would probably consider offering the Arab countries security guarantees but they would hesitate accepting for fear of appearing like Western lackeys, so that would be no better than an a transitional solution. If Iran acquired nuclear weapons it would be hard to talk the Gulf States and Egypt out of following its example.

***C. HOW TO CONVINCe IRAN NOT TO ACQUIRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND AVOID A NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST***

**1. Talks have not stopped Iran's nuclear program**

The United States has said a nuclear-armed Iran would be unacceptable and that, if the country did not halt its enrichment program, "all options are on the table". Washington has had no relations with Iran since its embassy was occupied in 1979, so the task of starting a "critical dialogue" with the Islamic Republic has fallen to Europe, which in 2003 entrusted Great Britain, Germany and France with the mission of conducting talks on the European Union's behalf. After several years of unsuccessful efforts, Europe decided to refer the matter to the UN Security Council, which enjoined Teheran to interrupt its enrichment activity. Iran failed to comply, so the Council voted to impose sanctions, which have had no effect.

One reason Iran has turned a deaf ear to Europe's arguments and proposals is that there is a **strong national consensus in favor of the nuclear program**. What is more, decision-making processes are complex in Teheran. The government is split into several factions, each with its own agenda, so stopping such a strategic program comes up against nearly insurmountable obstacles.

**2. It is unlikely that force can stop Iran's nuclear program**

**The United States has examined the hypothesis of destroying sites with an air attack** and presented it as a possible "solution" during George W. Bush's term. In early 2005 American journalist Seymour Hersch revealed that the US government still preferred the military option and started trying to locate all of Iran's production sites, but President Bush gave up the idea of an attack, which President Obama is not planning either.

Contrary to what one might think, **Israel** has not decided anything. The official position is clear: an Iranian nuclear arsenal would be an "existential" threat. However, there are two schools of thought. One would be resigned to nuclear proliferation and emphasize future strategic balances. The

other is intent on stopping Iran at all costs. The rapporteurs met representatives of each school in Israeli think tanks.

Part of the debate in Israel is not about the feasibility of an attack but about whether Iranian reprisals would make the cost too high. In that perspective, Israel's armed forces have apparently stepped up their dissuasion force's second strike capability: Harpoon missiles fired from Dolphin submarine have been fitted with nuclear warheads, silos have been hardened, etc. Israel has also updated its anti-ballistic defense by deploying US Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 anti-missile systems.

### **3. The only way left is sanctions**

**The economic sanctions voted by the Security Council five times have had no effect on Iran's behavior.** Iran has continued supporting Hezbollah, maintained the fatwa against Salman Rushdie and neither ratified nor applied the NPT additional protocol, leaving the IAEA in the dark. For Iran to envisage reconsidering its position, Germany, Italy, France, Russia and China would have to agree to vote harsher sanctions. Would they work? Probably not. The cases of Cuba and Iraq show that embargoes penalize ordinary people while leaving regimes unshaken.

How can the Iran regime be convinced to give up its nuclear ambitions? Like most dictatorships, it needs external crises to draw attention away from its domestic problems. Threats to Iran help the regime tighten its grip on power.

**The prospects of a nuclear Iran should not, in itself, frighten us.** There is no reason to think that dissuasion will not work as it always has. Iran's leaders hate the West and Israel but they care about their country and their power and they are rational people.

**But a nuclear Iran would trigger an arms race throughout the region and that would be a threat to world peace.**

That is why we must prepare to **toughen sanctions, in close cooperation with China and Russia.**

Sanctions, modest though they may be, have had harmful effects on the population and the reactions to the falsification of the latest presidential elections' results have shown the scope of popular discontent.

During the street protests following the presidential elections Ahmadinejad owed his grip on power only to support from the Supreme Guide, the pasdarans' and *basidj*'s strong-arm tactics and the patronage network he tirelessly maintains.

President Obama made a significant gesture by stretching out his hand to the Iranian government and saying, in his Cairo speech, that the United States was ready to start a dialogue with Iran on all issues without prior



conditions. That approach coincides with and strengthens that of Europe and should make it possible to verify if the policy of openness has any chance of success between now and the end of 2009.

**If it does not, the time will have come to impose truly effective sanctions on Iran. One would be an embargo on refined petroleum products, in particular gasoline. Iran is a huge consumer of gasoline and imports 40% of it. Government rationing in the summer of 2007 sparked riots and violence, compelling the authorities to reverse their decision. There is every reason to believe that a more or less complete halt of deliveries of refined petroleum products to Iran would prompt the government to stop and think. That step would be taken in consultation with the Gulf States to limit the impact of Iran's likely reprisal on the global market in terms of cutting off oil deliveries. It is imperative to associate China and Russia with this policy in order to ensure its effectiveness.**



## **CHAPTER III - WEAKNESSES**

In addition to the general weaknesses mentioned in the first chapter, the Middle East has three areas of fragility. The first is Yemen, which occupies a strategic position between the Horn of Africa and East Africa enabling it to control the Bab-el-Mandeb straits. Yemen may not be a failed State yet but is on the way to becoming one. Its president's authority stretches no further than the city limits of Sana'a, the capital. Its people are on the brink of starvation. Its high, steep-sided valleys serve as a refuge for Al Qaeda and its army is facing a tough uprising in the north for the sixth time. The second weak spot is Iraq. Will it remain united after US forces leave? The third is Lebanon, where the pro-Western March 14 Alliance won the June 7, 2009 elections. That victory is a cause for celebration but must not mask the importance of religious divisions and the impossibility of overcoming them.

### **I. ANARCHY IN YEMEN**

Yemen is the sick man of the Arabian Peninsula. This country roughly the size of France is ideally located south of Saudi Arabia west of Oman. With 24 million people, it is the peninsula's most populous country but also its poorest.

Yemen does have some assets: a little oil and gas and a high tourism and cultural potential. The age of its civilization, beauty of its landscapes, charm of its towns and hospitality of its people make Yemen a captivating country and earned it the sobriquet *Arabia felix*, "happy Arabia", in ancient times.

But Yemen missed the development train and suffers from endemic problems such as corruption, poor administration, lack of water and overconsumption of qat, a drug that anesthetizes people and makes them lethargic.

#### **A. THE SIX PLAGUES OF YEMEN**

##### **1. The absence of the State and a failed reunification**

People often refer to Yemen as a failed State. Once, there was not one Yemen but two: North Yemen, where high plateaus and tribal rivalries fostered divisions and lent themselves to guerilla wars; and South Yemen, whose capital, Aden, is an Indian Ocean port that had always aspired to independence. South Yemen included Hadramaout, cradle of the bin Laden family, which geographically is an extension of the Saudi Arabian desert.

A historical division is superimposed on this geographical diversity. Northern Yemen was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1918. The monarchy, or *imam*, was abolished there in 1962, when the country took the name Arab Republic of Yemen. Southern Yemen was part of the former British hinterland that gradually formed around the port of Aden starting in 1839. After the British left in 1967, an independent State came into being, which took the name People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and sided with the Soviet camp.

On May 22, 1990 the Arab Republic of Yemen and People's Democratic Republic of Yemen merged to form the Republic of Yemen. Soon afterwards, Yemen backed Iraq in the Gulf War, running afoul of the United States and, especially, Saudi Arabia, which expelled a million Yemeni workers.

Unification was a failure. The northerners abused their power and oppressed the people of the south. In 1994 southern Yemen unsuccessfully tried to secede under the name "Democratic Republic of Yemen" before falling back under the north's control. The scars of that division have not healed yet.

## **2. Poor administration**

Widespread corruption undermines the State apparatus while the elites accumulate assets abroad. However, reforms are under way. A national anti-corruption committee, directly reporting to the head of State, has been set up; the justice system has been reformed and a government contracts law aiming to introduce morality into the management of invitations to tender has been passed. The civil service is less corrupt and a census of functionaries has been made in order to identify those, and apparently there are many, who hold fictional jobs to increase their income. Nothing worked. Most of Yemen is still a huge lawless zone.

## **3. Lagging development**

Yemen lags far behind the rest of the Arabian Peninsula in human development. High fertility (6.8 children per woman in 2005) fuels demographic growth; 30% of men and 71% of women are illiterate. Nearly one-third of the population has no access to safe drinking water. A large proportion is extremely poor: 42% of Yemenis live on less than two dollars a day. Undernourishment, and no longer just malnutrition, as well as endemic diseases are widespread.

## **4. A weak economy**

Yemen's economy is based on three pillars:

- Oil, with 312,000 barrels/day in 2007, accounts for most of the country's revenues. France's Total is the biggest investor through the gas consortium Yemen LNG.

- Agriculture: the total cultivated area is big and of good quality. Unfortunately, 60% of the water is used to grow *qat*, which accounts for one-third of farm output.

- Money transfers from many Yemeni immigrant workers.

Yemen receives significant amounts of international financial aid, especially in the form of debt rescheduling and cancellation.

## 5. Insecurity

Yemen has been lax towards Islamic fundamentalist movements, which find logistical support and a safe haven for training camps on its soil. Its mountainous relief, porous border with Saudi Arabia and proximity to Somalia and Sudan make it an ideal refuge.

The West's reactions to rising insecurity have compelled the government to react. The emergence of Al Qaeda, Usama bin Laden's Yemeni roots, September 11, 2001, and the attacks against the destroyer *USS Cole* on October 12, 2000 and the French oil tanker *Limburg* on October 6, 2002 in the port of Aden have led President Saleh to shift gears. Under pressure from the West, especially the United States, he has become aware of the need to fight Islamic terrorism more effectively. At the same time, the Yemeni government must avoid ruffling the feathers of a very conservative population sympathetic to Islamic fundamentalism.

In June 2004 a serious uprising broke out in the mountainous northern region of Saada. The rebellion was led by a Zaydite (a branch of Shiism) religious leader, Hussein Badr ed-Din **al-Houti**, who was killed in September 2004 and replaced by his brother Abdelmali al-Houti. Government forces battled the insurgents for two months, resulting in the deaths of nearly 2,000 combatants on both sides. Fresh fighting broke out in 2005, 2007 and 2008. Not only has the central government been unable to restore its authority in the region, but the Houti rebels have also opened new fronts by joining forces with tribes from the Amran, Jawf and Sana'a regions. The conflict is reported to have caused the displacement of approximately 100,000 people.

The Houti movement has tribal roots and reflects a desire to defend Zaydism's specificity against the development by President Saleh's regime of a State Islam perceived as homogenized and dominated by Sunnism (although President Saleh himself is a Zaydite).

## **6. Isolation from the other Gulf countries**

Yemen has paid a high price for its pro-Iraq positions during the 1990 Gulf War and chronic instability since reunification. The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG) has never agreed to let Yemen join the organization and its relations with Saudi Arabia remain steeped in mistrust.

The outlook improved somewhat after June 2000, when Yemen and Saudi Arabia signed a treaty demarcating their common border. The borderline was not definitively drawn until 2006. For Sana'a that normalization was the condition for regional reinsertion and the payment of subsidies it receives from its powerful neighbor and the Gulf States.

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> CCASG summit in 2001 Yemen was admitted to some of the organization's technical cooperation bodies (health, education, labor and social affairs, sport). That decision was fortunate but had a limited impact on Yemen, although it could be seen as an encouraging sign that the Gulf countries have taken an interest in the country. But for the time being, CCASG membership remains an unlikely prospect because of Yemen's insecurity, which its neighbors fear will spread throughout the area.

### ***B. A SOURCE OF INSTABILITY THAT MUST BE HELPED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE***

Yemen is an alarming source of instability on the Arabian Peninsula and, with Somalia, on the other side of the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, an economically devastated area tending to lie outside international law.

The steps taken to consolidate the State do not seem to up to the danger.

#### **1. A source of instability**

The situation has become much worse since late 2005. Groups of Swiss, German, Italian and South Korean tourists have been held hostage as bargaining chips in negotiations between certain tribes and government officials. Four French tourists were taken hostage in September 2006.

Car bomb attacks targeted oil sites near Marib and Mukalla in September 2006. A July 2007 car bomb suicide attack near Marib killed seven Spanish tourists and two Yemenis. The list has grown longer since then, climaxing with the September 17, 2008 attack on the United States embassy in Sana'a, which killed 16 people. An Al Qaeda cell was broken up in August 2008, when approximately 30 alleged members of the group were arrested. Yemenis make up most of the detainees at Guantanamo: 96 out of 240.

Meanwhile, irredentism is still alive and well in southern Yemen, whose people perceived reunification as an annexation and the northerners' presence as an occupation. Many civil servants and military officers from the south have been dismissed and replaced by others from the north, who are notorious for their corruption. The people of the south consider themselves despoiled of their land and accuse leaders from the north of taking all the revenue from the south's natural resources. Discontent would probably lead to a break-up of the country if the Yemeni security forces did not control, often brutally, Aden and its region.

The combination of these various factors and the resulting insecurity—a weak State, powerful tribe inclined to offer activists refuge in the name of hospitality and high mountains where security forces are reluctant to venture—make Yemen an ideal haven for jihadists. The similarities with Afghanistan are striking.

In March 2009 two of Saudi Arabia's most wanted jihadists were arrested near Tazeh south of Sana'a. Approximately 100 other Saudi jihadist sympathizers sought by Riyadh's authorities are probably hiding in Yemen.

A rehabilitation program involving nearly 400 Yemeni Al Qaeda sympathizers momentarily neutralized the Islamist threat but some sources<sup>1</sup> say its main purpose was to allow the authorities to cut a deal with the jihadists. They would refrain from committing attacks in Yemen if the government turned a blind eye to their activities outside the country. That compromise deeply angered the US authorities, already seething at the 2007 release of one of the militants who masterminded the *USS Cole* attack.

In January 2009 one of Al Qaeda's branches in Yemen announced that the movement's Saudi and Yemeni branches had merged to create Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

## **2. How can Yemen be helped?**

The West's ability to help Yemen is limited and the Saudis are tired of paying money to such a corrupt regime. The Gulf countries could care less and would rather import labor from Pakistan and India than open up their borders to Yemeni workers. At a November 2006 meeting in London the World Bank's consultative group on Yemen pledged \$5.3 billion in aid for the 2007-2010 period, which was confirmed at the follow-up meeting on 4 February 2008. Saudi Arabia pledged a billion dollars, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates 500 million each. The European countries participated in the overall effort. However, the situation is still alarming, prompting a reconsideration of aid policy to Yemen.

**If Yemen does not join the CCASG**, and there is no indication the organization's members want it to, the Gulf States should open up their

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<sup>1</sup> See Georges Malbrunot, "Le Yémen, nouvelle base arrière d'Al-Qaïda" *Figaro.fr* 01/06/2009

borders to Yemeni workers. Western powers could pledge to carry out projects that would consolidate the State, such as **building schools and roads and training police officers and civil servants. In return, the donors could try to impose a negotiated solution to the Houti rebellion and send observers to the south in order to guarantee more respect for civil liberties.**

**Another international conference could be held to implement an overall strategy. Yemen has strong development potential, especially in tourism, but first a minimum of security must be restored.**

## **II. THE REBIRTH OF IRAQ**

On September 11, 2001 the United States was the target of attacks when terrorist flew airplanes into New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington. In his January 2002 State of the Union address George Bush accused the "axis of evil", Iran, Iraq and North Korea, of instigating global terrorism. Two years later, on March 19, 2003, US troops invaded Iraq, routing the Iraqi army and occupying Baghdad in three weeks.

There have been many questions about why Bush and his advisors launched an operation that quickly turned into a bloody quagmire. Several motives have been suggested: showing the world that US power remained intact after the humiliating tragedy of September 11, 2001; erroneous American intelligence on the existence and production of weapons of mass destruction; and the prospect of a swift, relatively painless victory over Saddam Hussein's dictatorial, unpopular regime.

Those reasons would not have been enough if the invasion had not had a more ambitious, presumptuous goal hatched by American neo-conservatives: turning Iraq into the Arab world's first democracy and a role model for the whole region.

### ***A. THE INVASION OF IRAQ: A TRAGIC MISTAKE***

The utopian dream, for that is what it was, fell apart a few months after coming into contact with Iraqi realities. The relief after the dictator and his regime fell was short-lived. Iraqis quickly perceived the US army not as liberators but as occupiers. Resistance was organized. On August 19, six months after the American invasion, a truck bomb destroyed the UN's offices in Baghdad, killing one of the organization's most highly respected civil servants, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Paul Bremer, the first US administrator appointed by the Pentagon, made some disastrous blunders. He dismissed all the Iraqi army's officers and non-commissioned officers without pay and excluded Baath Party officials from exercising any form of responsibility, thrusting a pool of experienced, seasoned, determined men into the arms of an insurrection that the United



States took nearly five years to quell. Several factors account for why the uprising spread so quickly and became so violent.

The rebellion was basically anti-American during the occupation's earliest months but quickly took on an interconfessional character, pitting the Sunni minority (20% of the population) against the Shiite majority (60%).

After the First World War Great Britain created Iraq by relying on the Sunni elite. It respected the Bedouin hierarchy, where farmers' communities are subject to the law and protection of the lords of the desert, the great Sunni camel-drivers.

When democratic institutions were set up power was in the hands of those who had been excluded from it, the Shiites, who comprise 60% of the population. The Sunnis, who are mainly concentrated in the center of Iraq, whereas most of the oilfields are in the southern Shiite region or the north's Kurdish area, considered they had nothing to lose and tacitly backed the Sunni insurgents. They saw themselves as politically and economically marginalized overnight.

In late 2001 the US army drove bin Laden and Al Qaeda out of Afghanistan. Later, bin Laden and Al Qaeda believed that the situation in Iraq offered a good opportunity to take a bloody revenge. Under the leadership of Jordanian maverick Abu Mussab Al-Zarqawi, "Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia" (AQM) committed many suicide attacks against US forces, Shiite shrines and the civilian population, targeting markets, mosques, religious festivals, weddings, funerals, etc. Al-Zarqawi's goal was to spark a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis.

Private confessional militias appeared. The biggest was the Mahdi Army, which was formed at the urging of a young imam, Muqtada al-Sadr, the son and grandson of famous ayatollahs killed by Saddam Hussein. It had up to 90,000 men and ruthlessly controlled a sprawling Baghdad quarter called Sadr City.

Baghdad became the scene of daily bloodshed. Car bombs, roadside explosive devices, suicide attacks, summary executions and kidnappings followed by beheadings turned Iraq into an hellish quagmire where the US army lost over 100 soldiers a month. Public opinion in the United States, which backed the invasion at first, gradually turned against the war. By 2006 many voices were calling for the troops to come home.

The Iraq invasion not only severely damaged the United States' image in the Middle East and the Third World; it also caused a serious trans-Atlantic crisis. France and Germany opposed the invasion. Paris argued that an intervention would be justified only if International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors found weapons of mass destruction and the UN Security Council approved the operation.

Neither condition had been met when Bush ordered the troops he had massed on Iraq's borders to invade the country.

Despite long, intense searches, no weapons of mass destruction or production sites were found. The invasion, whose only goal was to topple Saddam Hussein and change the regime, could only aggravate the Arab world's hostility and fuel anti-Western extremism.

That is exactly what France and Germany feared. A new danger joined the overall insecurity: the breaking up of the country into three ethnic-confessional communities pitted against each other —Kurds in the north, Sunnis in the center and Shiites in the south. In Baghdad, "cleansing" gradually made mixed neighborhoods ethnically homogenous.

### ***B. STABILIZATION: 2007-2009***

By early 2007 the steadily deteriorating situation appeared to be heading towards an inter-confessional civil war but started changing course late in the year, when a security, political and national stabilization process began to emerge.

#### **1. Stabilization of the security situation**

Iraqi officials and the US commander-in-chief, General Raymond T. Odierno, whom the mission met in his office in Camp Victory in one of the lavish palaces Saddam Hussein built and where the American general staff had set up its headquarters, gave converging information. Fourteen of Iraq's 18 provinces were considered secure and the other four, in the north, including Mosul and its region and Diyala province on the border with Iran, were in the process of becoming so. The death toll in Baghdad plummeted from 100 to 10 a day.

Two main reasons account for the spectacular, unexpected improvement.

First, the United States sent 30,000 additional troops to Iraq in the surge ordered by George Bush. They occupied and remained in areas out of which the insurgents had been driven, preventing them from coming back as they usually did. The surge also enabled them to take back and pacify Baghdad. US forces defeated the Mahdi Army and Muqtada al-Sadr had to leave the capital city.

The second, and probably most important, factor is the "Sunni awakening", when the Americans rallied the main Sunni tribes to their side. Disgusted by Al-Zarqawi's blind attacks on the civilian population, they switched sides, forcing Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, to leave the areas where it had become established. The tribes that rallied to the United States were paid the sum of \$300 a man per month. That means the Americans could rely on additional forces.

Part of the credit goes to the US commander in chief at the time, General Petraeus. It was his idea for the Sunni tribes to set up "awakening councils", or Sahwas, which today have approximately 100,000 men armed and paid by the United States.

## **2. Political stabilization**

Iraq had never had democratic elections, but the January 2009 provincial elections were the fifth since 2003. Despite insecurity, all of them took place in uncontested conditions. Average voter turnout was always around 50%.

The parliament (the People's Assembly) is a lively, sometimes passionate arena. Some of the clashes that bloodied Baghdad's streets now take place in parliament, where the post-electoral alliances necessary to form a government majority are forged. The Shiite community, which had created a united front, quickly split up into three factions: the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI), a religious alliance close to Iran led by the head of a great Shiite family, Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim; the Dawa Party, led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, which won the January 2009 elections; and the Sadrists, led by Muqtada al-Sadr. The Shiite's divisions have required and enabled the formation of majorities bringing together Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

## **3. National stabilization**

Since mid-2008 a resurgence of national consciousness has reduced, although not completely supplanted, ethnic-confessional loyalties. Prime Minister Maliki, who has gradually acquired a national aura, is largely responsible for that positive development. His January 2009 campaign themes were based on the rule of law and Iraqi identity; his success attests to the positive echo they found in public opinion.

Maliki was born in a small Kerbala province town in 1950. His grandfather was education minister under the monarchy in 1925. He studied Arabic and Shiite theology. Saddam Hussein's regime arrested and hanged several members of his family and tribe. In 1979 Maliki fled to Iran, where he lived for five years before residing in Damascus until Saddam Hussein's fall. Maliki joined the Shiite majority, Dawa. He comes from a tribal culture, is a poor public speaker and does not seem to have much charisma but presents himself with increasing success as the prime minister of all Iraqis, not hesitating to attack the Mahdi Army in Baghdad and Basra, showing that he can transcend his confessional allegiance in the interests of national unity—which does not prevent him from remaining dependent on his often burdensome Shiite political allies and falling under Sunni suspicion of being a Shiite leader in disguise. The authority, courage and self-confidence he demonstrated during the long, hard negotiations over the US forces'

withdrawal also helped make him the national leader, the defender of Iraq's sovereignty and independence its people had been waiting for. At first Maliki was chosen because of his self-effacing demeanor and the weak support his Dawa Party, a minority in the Shiite community, could give him. After taking office he became such a strong leader that some people now accuse him of authoritarianism.

### *C. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL*

Despite progress since summer 2007, it would be wrong to take Iraq's stability for granted. A major test awaits the country: the withdrawal of US troops, whose presence alongside Iraqi forces in quelling the insurrection explains most of the successes.

On November 27, 2008 the Iraqi parliament adopted the agreement between the United States and Iraq on the pullout of American forces, which will take place in three stages.

Stage one is already over: the US Army pulled out of Iraq's cities in June 2009, meeting the accord's deadline. Mosul is the only place the United States, because of the extreme tension in the city and its province, still has forces, with Baghdad's consent.

Stage two: most US troops will have left Iraq by August 2010, when only 35,000 to 50,000 support troops will remain.

Stage three: with the exception of units assigned to training and logistics tasks, the US Army will have completely pulled out by the end of 2011. The United States will not keep a permanent base in Iraq.

General Odierno told us that the United States would strictly respect the timetable, although the two countries can agree on changing it at any time. The ambassador of Great Britain, who met with the mission, said such an eventuality is probable.

Can Iraq's army and national police force prevent a resurgence of violence? Each has 300,000 men, which should suffice as long as ethnic and confessional loyalties do not take precedence over the duty to obey the government. When asked about that point, General Odierno said that 75% of the army and national police were loyal to the central government and 20% were in the process of becoming so. Nothing can be expected from the remaining 5%.

In the past few months a resurgence of violence has followed the US pullback from cities. Truck bombs have exploded in crowded markets, killing many people. Suicide attacks, kidnappings and summary executions are still a fact of everyday life. However, the violence must be put into perspective. Most of the terrorism is limited to Baghdad and the four unsecured provinces in the north and northeast and the number of attacks and casualties is steadily decreasing. The death toll has dropped from 26,000 in 2006 to 23,000 in 2007,

7,000 in 2008 and 3,000 in the first half of 2009. The figures nevertheless underscore the fragility of the progress made.

The "awakening councils" and "support councils" led by the Sunni tribes that went over to the United States now depend on a Shiite-led government. Maliki has pledged to maintain the Americans' financial aid and to integrate the Sahwas into Iraq's security forces, but has not followed through on those promises yet. Several incidents demonstrate that the government must show a great deal of skill and understanding if it wants to preserve a relationship essential to pacifying the country.

Let there be no illusions. Iraq is convalescing but not yet well. Setbacks are possible. Nobody is more aware of that than General Petraeus, who told the United States Congress that it would take a long time for the country to wipe out all the remaining extremist elements. It is clear, for example, that although Al Qaeda has suffered decisive setbacks its active or sleeper cells have committed several recent violent acts, in particular suicide attacks. Some information indicates that hostile elements have infiltrated the security forces.

Other threats are taking shape on the horizon: political instability is one. The January 2010 elections will probably continue the prime minister's winning streak that started in January 2009 but it is almost certain that no party will obtain an absolute majority allowing it to govern alone. A coalition will have to be formed and it is not certain that the talks between political parties will have a favorable outcome for Maliki and allow him to remain prime minister. He is popular abroad and in public opinion but not with political parties, which criticize him for being authoritarian. The Kurdistan government accuses him of turning a deaf ear to its territorial claims, especially with regard to Kirkuk, and of failing to apply article 140 of the Constitution, which calls for a referendum that the Kurds think they will win.

The mission heard the slogan "anybody but Maliki" on several occasions. If his opponents win the January 2010 elections, the political stability Iraq needs so much to overcome the many challenges it faces could be jeopardized.

The main challenge involves rebuilding the major infrastructure—roads, water, power and health—necessary for the indispensable improvement of living conditions. Iraqis have nothing. In the best of cases they might have access to a few hours of electricity and safe drinking water a day. The estimated cost of upgrading networks to the point where they can function properly is put at a minimum of \$60 billion. Infrastructure deterioration actually dates back to the sanctions imposed on Saddam Hussein's Iraq after the Gulf War. The air raids that accompanied the invasion and the ensuing insecurity made matters worse. American officials signed many reconstruction contracts with Iraqi and foreign companies but no positive effects can be seen on the ground.

The staggering amounts of money swallowed up in a bottomless pit of corruption largely explains why progress has been so slow. The NGO Transparency International ranks Iraq 178<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries, tied with Burma and Somalia. Officials have become aware of how serious the problem is. In March 2008 Iraq ratified the United Nations convention against corruption and set up a National Council on the Fight Against Corruption. The trade minister has just been forced to resign for misappropriation of funds. The amount of fraud connected to his ministry alone reportedly stands at \$5.3 billion. The plane in which he attempted to flee to Dubai was forced to turn back and the minister was arrested. The episode was spectacular but remains an isolated case. Until now fraud suspects have either met with impunity or successfully fled the country. Corruption is one of the major challenges the government emerging from the next elections will have to tackle.

Fortunately, Iraq is potentially rich because of its vast oil resources. Current output is 2.3 million barrels a day but likely to reach 2.5 million by late 2009. The government has set the goal of six million barrels a day in the coming years. Production might even surpass that level if existing facilities are upgraded and new ones built and put into service. Approximately \$50 billion to \$60 billion in investments are necessary, which requires the involvement of major international companies. A first contract has just been signed with a consortium formed around British Petroleum. Total, which is closely following the situation, has announced it is ready to become a special partner of Iraq's. Experts say that when Iraq's reserves are completely explored, which is far from being the case, it will rank as the world's second-leading oil producer after Saudi Arabia. Obviously Iraq has aroused great interest among the big companies.

Oil, which accounts for over 90% of Iraq's trade and budget revenues, does not only pose technical and financial problems but also has a major political dimension because of its uneven distribution. Northern Iraq around Kirkuk and Mosul, an area claimed by Kurdistan, accounts for 13% of output. The reserves and the rest of production are located in the southern Shiite province of Basra. Central Iraq, where Sunni tribes are concentrated, has no oil, which is why the Sunnis demand that it be considered a national resource whose exploitation and distribution is subject to the central government's authority rather than the provinces. The oil bill intended to settle the matter has made no headway in parliament and will not be taken up again until after the January 2010 elections. The law is an essential element of the national pact; the country's unity will not be preserved without it.

#### ***D. WILL IRAQ REMAIN UNITED?***

Rebuilding infrastructure, fighting corruption and distributing oil revenues are difficult challenges but Iraq's biggest problem will involve integrating Kurdistan into the nation as a whole. The country's two and a half million Kurds have enjoyed de facto autonomy under the West's protection

since the end of the Gulf War. They have a lightly-armed but loyal and disciplined 90,000-man military force, the Peshmergas. Iraq's constitution has made plenty of room for Kurdistan in the country's institutions: the president, Talabani, is Kurdish. Kurdistan's three provinces can freely set the dates of their provincial elections. Kurdistan has an international airport, draws substantial foreign investments and is free of insecurity. There would be no reason to dwell on the Kurds' situation were it not for one issue: they make large territorial claims that the Baghdad government and the rest of Iraq's Arabs reject.

Their demands involve the regions adjacent to Kurdistan, in particular the city of Kirkuk and its province. The president of Kurdistan's government, Massoud Barzani, who met with the mission a long time, repeatedly stated that Kirkuk is the historic capital of the Kurdish people, who are entitled to it no matter what. Kirkuk is more or less to the Kurds what Jerusalem is to the Israelis and Palestinians.

The Kurds will pose an intractable problem as long as they voice their demands in such radical terms. The rest of the population considers the disputed areas, starting with Kirkuk, as Arab. Maliki's government looks as though it is in no hurry to apply article 140 of the constitution calling for a referendum to settle the issue of Kirkuk, which, the Kurdish government says, should not happen until after the Arab inhabitants that Saddam Hussein settled in the city to Arabize it have gone back to the provinces from which they came.

President Barzani loathes Prime Minister Maliki, who obviously has no intention of budging before the next legislative elections. Meanwhile, Turkey is keeping a close eye on the situation. Iraq's northern neighbor has made it clear that it would not accept Kurdistan's independence under any circumstances and that Ankara would enforce full respect for the rights of the Turkmen, who are numerous in Kirkuk.

It is reasonable to think that the international community will pressure Kurdistan's authorities into toning down their demands and agree to a compromise on Kirkuk whose main lines were proposed to Baghdad by the United Nations secretary-general's special representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura in April 2009 on behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Iraq is important not only for its oil reserves but also because it straddles the boundary between the Arab world and Iran. Relations between Baghdad and Teheran have always been strained and contentious, the low point being the eight-year war Saddam Hussein unleashed in 1981. By eliminating him the United States did a tremendous favor for Iran, whose regional strategy focuses on Iraq for several reasons.

The first has a religious character. The greatest Shiite holy sites are not in Iran but in Iraq, where nine of the 11 Shiite imams are buried.

The second is political: in the nuclear standoff between Teheran and Washington, Iran has a strong hand in Iraq. The Islamic Republic clearly intends to preserve its influence there, especially since it has suffered some stinging setbacks, including the signature of the agreement to withdraw US forces, which Teheran tried to prevent; the division of the Shiite coalition, which it relied on for influence; the electoral defeat of the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI) led by Abdelaziz al Hakim, a stand-in for Iran; and the decline in the influence of the Sadrists, Iran's allies, in Baghdad.

Iraqi officials made it abundantly clear to the Senate mission that although they want close, friendly ties with their powerful neighbor and fellow Shiites, they have no intention of letting Teheran dictate to Baghdad.

As the United States and Iraq have normalized their relations, Iraq has returned to the Arab fold. In the past 18 months many of the region's countries have opened embassies in Baghdad and several heads of State and ministers have made official visits. Syria's prime minister traveled to Baghdad with approximately 10 ministers and senior civil servants. Damascus wants to lay the groundwork for close economic cooperation with Iraq, hoping that the rehabilitation of the Kirkuk-Banias pipeline will enable it to become Iraqi oil's natural outlet to the Mediterranean. When the Arab League president visited Baghdad, Maliki proposed that Iraq host and chair the next Arab summit.

Since summer 2008 the Iraqi government has done its utmost to forge closer ties with the Arabs. It has succeeded, with one important exception: Saudi Arabia's King Abdallah, who is waiting to see if Maliki really puts his country's interests above his Shiite loyalties before normalizing relations with Iraq.

The outlook for Iraq has become miraculously brighter in most areas in the past two and a half years, but the country is still on shaky ground and it remains to be seen if its three main groups—Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds—will be able to move forward together instead of falling into the trap of communitarianism.



### III. CONFESSIONALISM IN LEBANON

The reputedly pro-Western March 8 Alliance won the June 7 elections. The pro-Syrian March 14 Alliance made up of Hezbollah and General Aoun fell short of the number of votes they had expected and that many international observers had predicted.

The vote split along community lines, which are as strong as ever.

Lebanon's population is divided into three communities, roughly equal in size from a demographic point of view, that include 17 different religious currents: Sunni Muslims led by 38-year-old Saad Hariri, the son of the assassinated former prime minister Rafik Hariri; Shiite Muslims in the Amal militia, which barely matters anymore, and Hezbollah, led by Hassan Nazrallah; and Christians, who have split into two factions: the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geaga, Amine Gemayel and Michel El Murr, who have formed an alliance with the Sunnis, and those led by General Aoun, who has sided with Hezbollah and Syria. The Druze community accounts for approximately 5% of the population. Their leader is Walid Jumblatt, who does his best to protect his community's interests.

When General Aoun joined forces with Hezbollah, he brushed aside the Christians' traditional alliance with the Sunnis in order to take Lebanon's national into account. Some Christians considered that a transgression and view him as a traitor.

The fact that Hezbollah remained inactive during the Gaza events and accepted the election results shows that it is not merely a puppet of Iran and Syria, as some people often claim, but a full-fledged Lebanese political party.

**Lebanon's free and fair elections show that the parties have agreed to settle their disagreements with ballots instead of bullets.**

**Nevertheless, confessional and community rifts continue to dominate Lebanese politics. The construction of a Lebanese State capable of transcending those splits will still take a long time. It cannot be achieved until the issue of the 400,000 Palestinian refugees on Lebanese soil, which has poisoned relations between Lebanese and fueled instability for years, is settled. The problem will not be resolved until the refugees in Lebanon can settle and live in a Palestinian State. That is why a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict matters for Lebanon, as it does for the rest of the Middle East.**



## CHAPTER IV - QUESTIONS

What is happening with Al Qaeda? Are its leaders hiding in Pakistan's tribal areas? Can they communicate orders to cells claiming allegiance to them? Is the organization still capable of striking the West or is it morphing into something different? How will President Mubarak's succession unfold in Egypt? Will the regime's stability be jeopardized? Can Syria be reintegrated into the Arab fold and will it loosen its ties to Iran?

### I. WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH AL QAEDA?

Al Qaeda and its founder have been the focus of many analyses concentrating on its history and detailed its motives<sup>1</sup>. We will recall some points that seem important before considering the movement's development and future.

#### A. A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE

##### 1. The origins of Al Qaeda and its war aims

Al Qaeda emerged in the mountains of Afghanistan between 1996 and 1998. Its founder, Usama bin Laden, belongs to a dynasty of extremely wealthy Saudi businessmen that originated in Yemen. Bin Laden knew Afghanistan very well because he played a role alongside Abdallah Azzam, a key figure in the jihad against the Soviet occupiers. He returned to Saudi Arabia during the winter of 1989-1990. Basking in the glow of his prestige as a leader of the Afghan resistance, he is a moral and financial touchstone for thousands of Afghanistan veterans from the Arabian Peninsula. Bin Laden helped the Yemeni "Afghans" and urged them to fight a holy war against the Marxist regime in Aden. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990 he offered the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan, his services to mobilize Afghanistan veterans to defend the kingdom. Bin Laden loathed Saddam Hussein, who was guilty in his eyes of apostasy, the most serious crime in Islam. Prince Sultan courteously showed him out of his office: the royal family had already decided to ask the United States for military protection. For bin Laden, the deployment of hundreds of thousands of "infidel" soldiers in Saudi Arabia violated the holiness of the land where Mecca and Medina are located. Deeply troubled by

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<sup>1</sup> *The literature on this topic is abundant. See Gilles Kepel, Jihad, expansion et déclin de l'islamisme, Gallimard 2000, Olivier Roy, L'Islam mondialisé, Le Seuil 2002, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Les frontières du Jihad, Fayard 2006, Ian Hamel L'énigme Oussama Ben Laden, Payot 2008, François Heisbourg Après Al-Qaïda, Stock 2009, Michel Guérin and Jean-Luc Marret, Histoires de Djihad, Éditions des équateurs 2009.*

the stationing of US troops on Saudi soil after the liberation of Kuwait, bin Laden launched a barrage of virulent criticism against the royal family, accusing them of compromising with "infidels". Riyadh's ruling circles reacted by "authorizing" him to leave for Peshawar on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which look more like an expulsion. He eventually settled in Sudan, where an Islamic junta that offered Afghanistan veterans asylum had ruled since 1989. There he devoted himself to ambitious agricultural development projects and the building of strategic roads. But he also embellished the legend of an Arabic jihad in Afghanistan responsible for toppling the Soviet Union and called the United States a "paper tiger", citing its humiliation in Somalia in October 1993 as proof. After being stripped of his Saudi citizenship in March 1994, bin Laden became a generous, experienced benefactor of a jihad without borders. His second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian citizen, breathed new life into Egypt's jihad organization and its terrorist activities, including an unsuccessful attempt on President Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa in June 1995. Five months later bin Laden was blamed for two spectacular attacks: one against US military advisors in Riyadh, the other against the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad.

The United States, Saudi Arabia and Egypt joined forces to pressure Sudan into expelling bin Laden in May 1996. He went to Jalalabad, in southern Afghanistan, with the consent of Pakistan's army and intelligence services (ISI). He was joined there by al-Zawahiri, who contributed his know-how as well as the resources and militants of his organization, Al Djihad.

In a mountainous province on the border with Pakistan, bin Laden thought the time and place were ripe to challenge his adversaries, the United States and the Saud family. He returned to the tradition of the early Islamic conquerors, who ordered the infidel enemy to either submit or convert before the opening of hostilities. Bin Laden released a "declaration of jihad against the Americans, who are occupying the country of two holy mosques". That proclamation, the founding statement of a global jihad, came from a "safe base (*qâ'ida*)" in "these peaks where the world's mightiest atheistic military power crashed". It mentioned Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir, Tajikistan, Burma, the Philippines and Somalia but the top priority was to drive the "infidel" occupier out of Saudi Arabia.

That **declaration of jihad** is **Al Qaeda's founding act**. Soon after throwing down the gauntlet bin Laden joined forces with Mullah Omar, who had just proclaimed himself "commander of the believers" in Kandahar, southern Afghanistan. Pakistan's special services facilitated the alliance and organized the first meeting between them. Bin Laden urged Omar "to order good and pursue evil" and said he backed the mullah's plan to set up the "**Islamic emirate of Afghanistan**". The crude, mistrustful Taliban leader was receptive to "Sheikh Usama's" flattery and generosity. "Nothing suggested that the stateless conspirator and the hot-tempered Taliban would collaborate one day," wrote Jean-Pierre Filiu. "Both had just started an incredible distortion of Islam's values, bin Laden by calling for global jihad, Omar by donning the

Prophet's mantle.<sup>1</sup> In March 1997 the Afghan Taliban officially announced that bin Laden was their "guest". The declaration was not only taken very seriously abroad but also in Kandahar, where the Pashtun tribal code considers guests sacred.

In the next 18 months bin Laden methodically consolidated his "base" in the Taliban emirate. He and Zawahiri aspired to spread a global terrorist jihad. In February 1998 they created the "**World Islamic Front of Jihad against Jews and Crusaders**", which is the real name of what we call Al Qaeda. The "liberation" of the holy places of Jerusalem and Mecca was still the priority but the target became global: "to kill Americans and their allies, both civilians and military, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible".

On August 7, 1998 two blasts simultaneously struck the US embassies in Dar es-Salam and Nairobi, slaughtering many people. The "Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places" claimed responsibility for the attacks, which were quickly attributed to bin Laden and terrorists recruited in Afghanistan. Washington and Riyadh demanded that the Taliban hand over bin Laden and dismantle Al Qaeda but Mullah Omar flatly refused in the name of sacrosanct Pashtun hospitality. In spring 1999 bin Laden and his operational mastermind, Mohammed Atef, an Egyptian, planned a complex operation involving the coordinated hijacking of jetliners in the United States. They entrusted the project to Khaled Cheikh Mohammed, who was behind the attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and the *USS Cole* in Yemen on 12 October 2000, for which bin Laden claimed responsibility on February 26, 2001. The same day, Mullah Omar decided to blow up the giant statues of Buddha in Bamyan.

Mullah Omar did not know bin Laden had chosen September 11, 2001 for an "apocalyptic" attack. The Al Qaeda leader targeted the United States alone and may not have imagined that the attack would cause an international outcry. The next day the UN Security Council announced it was "ready to take the necessary measures to respond to terrorist attacks". The United States began bombing Afghanistan on the night of October 7 to 8, 2001. Bin Laden, who had been silent until then, appeared alongside al-Zawahiri on the Qatar-based Al Jazeera satellite network, where he said he "**swears before Allah that America will not have peace until peace reigns in Palestine and the army of infidels leaves the land of Mohammed**".

## 2. Al Qaeda and the concept of jihad

Jean-Pierre Filiu writes that few concepts have been as distorted as jihad. Usually translated as "holy war", "jihad on the way to God" refers to the Muslim community's mobilization on a war footing to defend itself or conquer new lands. But whether it is defensive or offensive, military jihad is less noble

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *op. cit.*, p. 132

than the "great jihad", which refers to the Muslim's pietist, if not mystical, effort to deepen his faith.

Contrary to popular belief, jihad is not one of the five pillars of Islam, which are the profession of faith, prayer, alms-giving, fasting during Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca.

**The modern-day association between jihad and terrorism dates back to October 6, 1981** and the assassination of President Anwar el-Sadat, whose killers said they belonged to a group called "**jihad**" and boasted of having punished the first Arab head of State to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

In **1983** the mysterious "**Islamic Jihad Organization**" appeared in Beirut, harassing the multinational force deployed in Lebanon and committing two simultaneous suicide attacks on October 23, 1981 that killed and wounded hundreds of French and US troops.

As the terrorist jihad spread in the Middle East, another kind of jihad emerged in Afghanistan: resistance to Soviet occupation. A loose Arab group originating in Egypt and Saudi Arabia swelled its ranks forged its legend, taking credit for defeating the USSR, which was actually the work of Afghan resistance fighters, the mujahideen. The "nomads" of global jihad also fought in Bosnia, Chechnya and Kashmir, but everywhere they clashed with the proponents of national struggle and eventually found themselves back in Afghanistan, where they set up their base.

The international mobilization against terrorism starting in autumn 2001 deprived the global jihad of its Afghan sanctuary but did not wipe out Al Qaeda, which started looking for a new safe haven. It seized the opportunity offered by the US-UK invasion of Iraq to gain a new lease on life in the heart of Islam and establish itself on the borders of Saudi Arabia. At first, the Sunni Iraqi jihad, in the hatred and confusion of the resistance to US occupation, accepted help from Al Qaeda to oust the "infidels" but the alliance foundered on the Shiite jihad. After all, Iraq is where Islam's great schism took place

There is a fundamental difference between Al Qaeda's jihadism, which is borderless and has global goals, and "Islamic-nationalist" movements such as Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban, whose demands are national.

### **3. Jihadism and Islamic nationalism**

As Olivier Roy shows, Al Qaeda is a global, decentralized, borderless organization relatively cut off from Middle East issues. It has no political roots in the Muslim population. Al Qaeda radicals are "deterritorialized": the country where they were born is not where they go into action. The hijackers who crashed planes in the World Trade Center and the terrorist doctors in Great Britain in June 2007 had very different profiles.

Al Qaeda does not seek to control a territory but to ignite a "clash of civilizations" by inflicting damage on the Western powers, especially the

United States, that will make headline news, amplifying its image. That is more important than the reality of the damage. "Al Qaeda needs those it demonizes because perception leads to political action," writes Olivier Roy.<sup>1</sup>

The same cannot be said for Islamic-nationalist movements. Islam may be at the heart of their struggle, but it is limited to well-defined areas—Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Pakistan—and their goal is not just the Islamization of society but also the liberation of their country. There are disagreements, if not clashes, within these movements between those who argue that society must be Islamized before a country is liberated—Sheikh Yassine's position before the creation of Hamas—and those who assert that Islamization will come only after an area has been freed of direct or indirect foreign control. The differences of opinion matter little. These groups are always "national liberation movements" whose goals are very different from Al Qaeda's, even if the operating methods, in particular suicide attacks, and the invocation of Islam are the same.

## ***B. THE END OF AL QAEDA?***

### **1. The mistakes of the "all-out war on terror"**

In response to the September 11 attacks, George W. Bush's administration set up a strategy based on "the global war on terror" (or terrorism). The military intervention in Iraq was portrayed as one of the battles.

The very concept of a *global war against terrorism* was a mistake. Terrorism is merely a method. The groups and men that implement it are what must be fought. War was declared on Hitler, not on the *blitzkrieg*. Declaring war on a method—terrorism—or a feeling—terror—shifts the focus away from the enemy that *should* have been named: the "international jihadists", Usama bin Laden or "the Islamic front against Jews and crusaders".

It is easy to understand why the United States was reluctant to launch a manhunt for what was just a loosely organized band of a few hundred fanatics, not an international organization. It was probably hard to admit that such a small group, working with such primitive means, could inflict such damage on the world's leading power. The United States did not have much to gain from such a manhunt, if not a few small successes out of all proportion to the means deployed.

It was necessary to attack not just men—terrorist groups—but also the "rogue States" that shelter them. The United States quickly and easily took control of Afghanistan in late 2001, but the operation did not suffice to wash away the humiliation Al Qaeda had wrought. It was necessary to strike a country putting up enough resistance that its surrender would show the world

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<sup>1</sup> Olivier Roy, *Le Croissant et le Chaos*, p 169.

no State could attack the United States with impunity. Iraq was perfect for the part of scapegoat, especially since the neo-conservatives and their Republican allies, such as Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, wanted the "finish the job" George H. W. Bush had started during the Gulf War, when US troops stopped at the Iraqi border.

The focus on terrorism and Iraq became a doctrine in President George W. Bush's "national security strategy" published in autumn 2002. Too much stress has probably been put on the "preventive" military strikes the "Bush doctrine" advocated when the United States' interests were threatened and too little on the fact that it also emphasized international cooperation and the defense of human rights and freedoms. The "Bush doctrine" pursued the ambitious goal of remolding the Arab-Muslim world, by regime change if necessary. As Olivier Roy wrote, "the neoconservatives pushed to the limit the idea that Western values are universal and must be promoted, by direct intervention if need be"<sup>1</sup>. That policy broke with the West's traditional policy of backing the regimes in place, whether or not they were authoritarian. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be settled in order to stamp out the roots of hatred, but that is just a particular aspect of a much broader problem: the region will spawn men and movements that threaten the security of Americans and their allies as long as it is plagued by tyranny, despair and anger.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the global war on terror mainly involved police and military actions carried out by the US government and supported by its NATO allies against organizations close to Islamist terrorism. It combines direct struggle—dismantling terrorist cells and destroying training camps—and indirect action: investigating and putting pressure on governments, groups and people backing terrorist movements; and freezing assets suspected of belonging to terrorist groups or of being used on their behalf. The global war also includes financial aid to countries participating in the fight against terrorism and the development of international cooperation in intelligence, police and justice.

The policy has had meager results. The United States, traditional defenders of the rule of law and civil liberties, lost sight of those values, and especially of due process, by resorting to torture and imprisonment without trial. The prisons at Abu Ghraib in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba have become sad symbols of that. Following the United States' example, the United Kingdom is the only European country to set up a procedure that flouts the European Convention on Human Rights, allowing the detention without trial of "presumed international terrorists" who could not be expelled for a practically unlimited period of time (chapter IV of the 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act). The European Court of Human Rights condemned the procedure, which has since been abolished. Meanwhile Al Qaeda, which had no presence in Iraq, was able to become a force there, recruiting and

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<sup>1</sup> Olivier Roy, *op. cit* p. 10

<sup>2</sup> Speech by President George W. Bush on 4 February 2004



training members until blind attacks on the civilian population turned the Sunni tribes against it.

## 2. Al Qaeda's mutations

Al Qaeda's astounding ability to mutate and adjust to circumstances explains its resilience after 2001. It is decentralized and opportunistic. Its strategy consists of slipping through cracks in Western security systems or in countries where the State is weak, if not inexistent, to set up training camps and stage global operations from a safe haven. Al Qaeda's use of the Internet helps maintain the impression that the movement is more active than it actually is and gives it an international presence.

Al Qaeda draws its recruits from the heterogeneous pool that intelligence experts call the "**community of resentment**". In most cases there is no recruitment. Converts enlist, individually or in small groups, under the organization's banner to boost their visibility. Saudi journalist and bin Laden expert Jamal Khashoggi says Al Qaeda is above all a **state of mind** that can be maintained in many ways, from an exclusively religious education to television broadcasts, Internet and fiery sermons in mosques exalting Islamic identity. In the context of fierce hostility to the West and its values, the mere presence of tourists in Muslim countries can provoke a terrorist act.

One of Al Qaeda's most frightening specificities is that it tends to position itself on a virtual register in order to become a "reference" or a "label" and keep alive the myth of the clash of civilizations between the West, perceived as Christian, and the Muslim world, thought of as essentially Sunni. Al Qaeda views Shiites as heretics, relegating them to the same rank as Jews and Christians and committing mass attacks against Shiite pilgrimage sites.

Extremists use the Al Qaeda label and references to bin Laden to seem stronger than they actually are, while some States do likewise in order to obtain help in their fight against local rebellions and justify repression.

## 3. Assessing the fight against Al Qaeda

The fight against Al Qaeda has had mixed results, especially in light of the fact that no other terrorist group has ever been combated with so much effort. It is necessary to specify which part of Al Qaeda is being referred to before taking stock of the situation. Experts tend to identify three circles:

- the inner circle, which could be called **central Al Qaeda**, is based on the Afghan-Pakistani border and comprises the organization's "old guard" and **leadership**;

- the second circle includes "**franchises**" such as AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) or AQAP (Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula), which stem from local movements that spontaneously claim to be part of Al Qaeda;

- the outer circle is made up of **autonomous movements** that try to acquire the Al Qaeda label through violent actions.

The first circle seems to have survived with its central leadership and ideology intact and its intentions unchanged. Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri are still at large, although many cadres such as Mohamed Atef or Khaled Cheikh Mohammed, the September 11 mastermind, are dead or in jail. Bin Laden's survival fuels the myth, which is alarming in that the fight against Al Qaeda is largely a matter of perception.

The second circle is noticeably weaker on the operational level. It has not committed an attack in the West since 2005 and its involvement in the Afghan conflict remains marginal. Signs of weakness—internal disagreements, defections and failures—are increasing. Al Qaeda has been unable to federate the Islamic struggle and to wrest control of some theaters of strategic operations, such as Palestine. But its main failure is the inability to rally widespread popular and political support. That is why it seems confined to a very small number of sanctuaries: the Afghan-Pakistani border zone and Yemen. Other areas, such as the Horn of Africa's failed States and certain sub-Saharan countries, including Mali or Niger, which are incapable of controlling their vast areas, offer possible sanctuaries.

The "community of resentment" and the state of relations between the West and the Arab world fuel the growth of totally autonomous cells. Putting out those embers will weaken Al Qaeda and its satellite groups.

**In conclusion, it should be recalled that the Afghanistan war's main goal was to deprive Al Qaeda and its allies of a safe haven, not to set up a democratic State. Instead of convincing tomorrow's Afghan leaders, whoever they may be, of the danger of sheltering Al Qaeda on their soil as the Taliban did, the aim should be to create and train Afghan security forces strong enough to fight the Taliban and restore the people's trust. The ultimate goal is to build a State from security zones. Have we given ourselves the resources to do that?**

**Al Qaeda's fight is mainly ideological. It uses modern mass communication techniques, which is why the reasons for anti-Western hatred must be understood in order to intelligently combat it.**

## **II. HOW WILL MUBARAK'S SUCCESSION TAKE PLACE IN EGYPT?**

The rapporteurs arrived in Cairo on February 22, 2009, the same day a young Frenchwoman, Cécile Vannier, was killed in the attack on the Khan Khalili bazar. As President Hosni Mubarak's succession draws near, they found a society under control but beset by deep tensions.

### ***A. A SOCIETY BESET BY DEEP TENSIONS***

#### **1. A worsening economic situation**

Egypt has 80 million people, making it the Middle East's most populous country. Its weak economy offers bleak prospects to the 600,000 young people entering the labor market every year. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) says 58% of the population lives on less than two dollars a day.

The situation is bound to worsen due to the global economic slump. Revenues from the three mainstays of Egypt's economy will plummet in 2009. Tourism, the main source of income at \$11 billion a year, is expected to drop by 40%. So are oil and gas exports. The finance minister says Suez Canal revenues are likely to fall by 25%.

Economic expansion is expected to decrease from 7% in 2008 to 4% or even 2% in 2009, but a 5% growth rate is necessary to absorb newcomers on the labor market.

#### **2. No glimpse of change on the political horizon**

The Muslim Brotherhood is far from universally popular and unlikely to win power in free and fair elections. The organization itself says it is not ready to govern. The rapporteurs met its parliamentary group's leader, who sought to put across the image that the Muslim Brotherhood is a reasonable opposition party based on religious values, comparable to Europe's Christian Democrats. Mentioning what happened to Hamas after its election victory in Palestine, he said he cared more about winning over public opinion with an active social program than about winning elections, for fear of sparking a violent reaction from the army and the international community.

The political center is fragmented between the hegemonic National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Muslim Brotherhood. Some parties, like Al Wasat, are banned. The most charismatic leaders, such as Ayman Nour, head of the Hizb al-Ghad ("the party of tomorrow"), are in jail. Nour's case is revealing. On December 24, 2005 he was stripped of his parliamentary

immunity and sentenced to five years in prison without parole for fraud in the procedure of the recognition of his new party's statutes in 2004. But the real reason was for being President Mubarak main rival in the September 2005 presidential elections, when he won 7.3% of the votes—a very high score in a country where no stone is left unturned to ensure that the candidate in power achieves an overwhelming victory and voter turnout is just 10%. The strong show of support for Nour worried the regime, which changed the election laws so that such an event could not happen again. Nour was released in February 2009 after Hillary Clinton pressured Mubarak at the Sharm El Sheikh summit.

### **3. A diplomatic position that sparks popular anger and frustration**

Egypt insists on remaining an indispensable mediator between the parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All roads lead to Cairo: negotiations between Israel and Hamas for the release of Gilad Shalit, as well as between Fatah and Hamas. But the lack of tangible results reveals how hard it is for Egypt's leaders to influence the course of events and attests to the contradiction in Egyptian foreign policy caused by the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process since the late 1990s.

Egypt is trying to preserve its international status by playing a role that brings it closer to Israel and the United States, which ruffles the feathers of public opinion. "Where is the Egyptian army?" chanted protestors demonstrating against Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Yet Egypt's diplomacy was the last aspect of President Mubarak's policy that remained uncriticized in public opinion, except for the relationship with Israel.

## ***B. A BLOCKED SOCIETY***

### **1. Widespread unease**

Egypt is not the only country plagued by economic and political tensions, but they have combined with anger and frustration over its diplomacy during Israel's Gaza offensive to cause widespread resentment against the government. The police have put down street demonstrations but people have internalized their revolt, causing a hardening of identity. Egypt is one of the Middle East's most significant examples of this.

The hardening of identity takes the form of the return of religion as a social norm, community bond and factor of aggressiveness. Clashes between the Muslim majority and the community of approximately six million Coptic Christians have never been as violent as in the past few years. They are accompanied by a deliberate display of religious signs.

The return of religion is also accompanied by dwindling support for the Western-style women's emancipation movement that the urban upper and middle classes backed in the 1920s. Veiled women work, study and are very visible in public spaces. The veil has enabled young women from the most patriarchal and conservative circles to leave the family and, in a way, fostered a certain degree of emancipation, but others consider it a step backwards.

## **2. The risk of terrorist attacks**

According to information the rapporteurs obtained on site, the February 22 attack in Cairo was probably committed by a small group of improvised terrorists. The bomb was handmade, the explosive power low. Nobody ever claimed responsibility. Egypt had already experienced a wave of similar attacks in 2005. They are carried out by small groups expressing widespread anger through violence. They do not seem to fit in with the overall pattern of attacks in 1980s whose aim was to destabilize the regime. These kinds of attacks strengthen rather than weaken President Mubarak's regime. Most Egyptians are outraged by them because they kill innocent people and deter tourism, the main source of income for a million Egyptian workers. The hypothesis of a punitive action against France remote-controlled by Lebanon's Hezbollah has been mentioned but not proved.

### ***C. A SOCIETY UNDER CONTROL AS PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK'S SUCCESSION DRAWS NEAR***

#### **1. A society under control**

Egypt has only had two short-lived revolutions in the past century (1919 and 1952). Many observers say Egyptians are exceptionally peaceful and patient. Widespread poverty and harsh living conditions inflict a structural violence that generates little crime compared to countries confronted with the same tensions, in Latin America for example. The endless patience of a still highly-structured society combines with omnipresent police control to maintain relative calm.

In addition, the government conducts pursues a clever policy to curb political alternatives. The Muslim Brotherhood is split into two main currents: the "conservatives", who are actually "radicals", advocate the merger of religious and political authorities, whereas the "progressives" or "liberals" espouse the strict separation of political and religious institutions. The Egyptian government is trying to leave the monopoly of the Islamic opposition to the radicals in order to strengthen their role as a scarecrow by systematically imprisoning the progressive wing's leaders. That is a classic political strategy consisting of giving the partisans of "chaos" center stage in order to swing public opinion behind the upholders of law and order.

## **2. Hosni Mubarak's succession**

The way has been paved for Gamal Mubarak, a highly Westernized businessman, to have real power in the NDP, strengthening his chances of succeeding his father. Nevertheless, his candidacy has come up against many stumbling blocks, starting with the fact that many Egyptians, in particular army officers, resent that Mubarak has handpicked his son to be his political heir, viewing it as an imitation of the Syrian model and an example of the decay of the republican spirit. The fact that Gamal Mubarak is not from the ranks of the military also weakens his chances. Lastly, some of his father's unpopularity rubs off on him.

However, if constitutional procedures are followed, only a handful of people in the in the NDP is eligible for the highest office in the land. Gamal Mubarak is one of them. A small group will make the final choice based on an already established procedure and the decision will probably not clash with the army's orientations.

But to tell the truth, the question of knowing who will succeed Mubarak matters little because the new president will necessarily be an insider chosen for his ability not to ruffle the army's or business circles' feathers.

The choice of when the succession is settled will be crucial: Gamal Mubarak will have a good chance during his father's lifetime; after Hosni Mubarak's death, the army will probably impose its man.

Since 1952 the army has been the only organization whose legitimacy is unanimously unquestioned in Egypt. It is a leading political and economic power and the country's biggest property owner, with military and civilian manufacturing sites, tourism investment programs and retired generals in parliament. The army controls diplomacy, which is not in the hands of a diplomat but of a military officer. The same is true of the economy. The army is a parallel society that supplies all its members with housing, health care and holiday villages. It will undoubtedly resist any attempts to loosen its ties to power.

In those conditions, the likeliest hypothesis is that General Omar Souleiman, the minister of internal security, will become president. That is also the opinion of the Muslim Brotherhood leader the rapporteurs met.

In conclusion, Egyptian society resembles a pressure cooker. Freedom of expression, limited to a fringe of the population, acts as a safety valve, so an explosion will probably not occur. If destabilization takes place it will probably come from an external shock or a major regional crisis.

The Arab world still looks up to Egypt because of its big population, outstanding scientific, artistic, intellectual and medical elites and skilled diplomats, but its dependency on the United States and desire for peace with Israel weaken the country's position in the Middle East. Egypt's diplomatic

influence is limited to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which it wants to keep under its control.

**French diplomacy must continue to consider, but not overestimate, Egypt's importance in the region in general and in the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. The fact that Egypt signed a separate peace with Israel has weakened its position with all the other parties and reduced its margin of maneuver as an honest broker. The deadlock of the talks under its aegis between Fatah and Hamas is one example. France must respect the importance of Egypt's role as co-leader of the Arab world with Saudi Arabia but also pursue the diversification of its relations with the Arab League countries.**

### **III. WHITHER SYRIA?**

Syria is a multiconfessional country with a Sunni majority and Christian, Alawite, Druze and Kurd minorities. That does not keep it from being very attached to its unity, which is imposed with an iron fist by one Alawite family, the Assads, who control the army and have gradually opened up and liberalized the economy.

#### ***A. SYRIA'S STRATEGY: REFORM ITS ECONOMY WHILE PRESERVING ITS UNITY***

Economic development is gradually moving forward. Bashar el-Assad does not intend to be a "Syrian Gorbachev" whose reforms would shake the foundations of power. Syria expects economic openness to attract the investors its economy needs and would not like them to be from Iran. Europe is being courted but its big corporations, such as Alstom, have bad memories of past experiences and are reluctant to make new commitments. Syria is more successful with certain small and medium-sized companies, such as BEL cheese, which has built one of its regional plants there. The European Investment Bank is also active in Syria. The country's trade is growing, in particular with Turkey, which has become its main economic partner. Although Syria's development is closely controlled, it has spawned social equality. Beautiful neighborhoods with luxury are alongside poverty. What's more, the country has approximately a million Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. Inflation is high and, in that context, ethnic tensions are emerging, in particular between the Arab majority and the large non-Arab-speaking Kurdish minority in the north, where most of the country's small oil reserves are located. The Syrian authorities take the tensions that could threaten the country's unity very seriously.

#### ***B. SYRIAN DIPLOMACY: HARD IN APPEARANCE, BALANCED IN REALITY***

Syria belongs to the group of countries forming the "rejection front" but its hardline attitude towards Israel is primarily intended for domestic consumption. In a brightening but still tough economic context, it helps shift the public's frustrations to a foreign scapegoat.

Syrian diplomacy is actually less univocal than it seems. Damascus knows how to play its various hands depending on the circumstances.

Damascus gives Lebanon's Hezbollah important aid and the movement's weapons and money from Iran transit through Syria, which also hosts the political branch of Hamas and its leader, Khaled Meshaal. An old friendship links it with Iran and strong arguments will be necessary to



convince the country to renounce it. The handover of the Golan Heights, which Israel annexed in 1967, would make a decisive contribution.

Damascus plays the France card with a great deal of realism. Syria has a complex relationship with France, made up of attraction to its republican, centralized model and hard feelings over the action our country conducted against its presence in Lebanon.

Syria plays one or another of those cards depending on the circumstances. If the situation eases it draws closer to France and urges Turkey to open talks with Israel over Golan. If the situation becomes tense, it becomes closer to Iran and brings its influence on Hezbollah and Hamas into play. Damascus walks a tightrope to look out for its national interests of the moment.

Today Syria is seeking détente in its relations with the West. The International Criminal Court's release of four pro-Syrian Lebanese generals incarcerated in August 2005 in the framework of the investigation of Rafik Hariri's assassination probably helped to warm up the climate. The appointment of a US ambassador and the prospect of a visit to Damascus by the king of Saudi Arabia can only accentuate the trend. On May 20, 2009 Syria released Michel Kilo and Mahmoud Issa, two important political prisoners who had served out their sentences.

Nevertheless, the domestic political situation is changing at a snail's pace. Signatories of the Damascus Declaration for Non-Violent National Democratic Change, who belong to a broad coalition of political parties created in 2005, have been in jail since participating in December 2008 in an assembly that wanted to set up a national council representing them. Observers believe the human rights situation in Syria has actually regressed rather than improved. Trials, when they take place at all, do not respect the rights of the defense. Abuse and torture remain common. The situation is reportedly worse than at the end of the Hafez el-Assad era, when many political prisoners were released.

Moreover, Damascus applauded Ahmadinejad's reelection in Iran and the official media did not mention the protests or accusations of vote fraud. They did recall his commitment to the poor and a peaceful nuclear program.

**The rapporteurs nevertheless conclude that the president's decision to normalize France's relations with Syria was right and should be pursued, but that Syria should be pressured into releasing jailed human rights campaigners.**



## **CHAPTER V - BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE**

Modernization, slow and cautious in Saudi Arabia, quick and bold in the Gulf States, is opening up promising prospects and drawing a different face of the Arab world.

### **I. SAUDI ARABIA'S CAUTIOUS MODERNIZATION**

Since 1995 a string of deadly attacks on oil facilities, foreigners, the security forces and justice officials has rocked Saudi Arabia, but the country has become more peaceful in the past few years. The global economic crisis affects it but has not caused any major destabilization. King Abdallah will go down in history as a great reformer. He has undertaken economic, social and political reforms to modernize the country in the paradoxical hopes of preserving the archaic monarchical system. Since his March 2002 Middle East peace initiative, Saudi Arabia has restored its leadership in the Arab world and appeared as a genuine partner for peace in the eyes of the West.

Saudi Arabia has come a long way. In the past 15 years conflicts in the royal family and growing discontent in the historic Hedjaz region of Mecca and Jeddah, as well as in the strategic area of Hassa (Dammam), with its oilfields and Shiite majority population, have weakened the country. Young people, literate but poor and jobless, unsuccessfully sought a place and a future in a society that had changed incredibly fast in the space of a generation despite poverty that still plagued two-fifths of households. The kingdom lost much of its shine in 2001, when it turned out that 15 of the 17 September 11 terrorists were Saudi.

The United States suddenly realized that the billions of dollars Saudi Arabia had paid the Muslim world's most fundamentalist movements were being used to finance acts of terror against its cities. Were it not for the network of personal ties between US and Saudi leaders, and Saudi Arabia's economic importance on the oil market, the kingdom would logically have been included in the "axis of evil", perhaps even invaded and occupied. That is probably what bin Laden wanted in order to get rid of the hated Saud family and spark a holy war against the United States.

Why was Saudi Arabia so fragile in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries? How did it become stronger again? Has the pacification in recent years, obtained by a combination of repression and reforms, laid the groundwork for a veritable consolidation of the country?

### ***A. THE INITIAL WEAKNESSES***

The Saudis were sedentary merchants in Nadj, in the middle of the country. They had no legitimacy, be it religious—the Hashemites of Mecca, the Prophet's descendants, did—or political, which was held by the great nomadic tribes. Nevertheless, after two failed attempts in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the family established its domination over most of the territory it coveted. To achieve that goal, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the Saudis joined forces with **Muhammed ibn Abd-al-Wahhab**, a religious leader who espoused an ultra-fundamentalist version of Islam named after him. It could have been called an "alliance between the sword and the turban".

The Saudis relied on the tribes for their power by forcing them to form a national army in the service of their conquests (1913-1929) before putting down their uprising with British help. Then they undermined the tribes' desire for independence with a clever policy of marriages with the king, who chose wives from each one. Those alliances produced the 6,000-man princely class, which is exclusively made up of the Saudis' descendants and has supplanted the tribes in the midlevel civil service.

The Saudis forged the third alliance underpinning their regime with the educated merchants of Hedjaz, a social group that put its skills at creating, managing and administering wealth, which had made them powerful under the Ottoman Empire, at their service. Instead of being rewarded, the Hedjaz merchant class lost the democratic freedoms it had won before its region was integrated into the kingdom and never got them back<sup>1</sup>.

Even before oil became virtually the country's only resource, the Saud family created the outlines of a modern State through "administrative, fiscal and monetary unification and gradual centralization"<sup>2</sup>.

At the end of that relatively quick process, Saudi society found itself without a true civil society. Family solidarity, *açabiyya*, was the only bond between individuals, who were freed of tribal allegiances. The Saudi regime was able to gain complete domination over the new society by exerting moral pressure through the ulemas, religious authorities under their control, and through a ruthless judicial system ordering over 100 capital executions a year. In addition, the redistribution of oil wealth helped to ensure the submission of the majority of the population, which had become unproductive.

The windfall from the 1973 oil boom upset the balance. Royal family members and a small group of privileged individuals, who had the right to skim commissions off of international trade contracts, were at the core of a system of widespread corruption.

When oil prices collapsed after a period of speculation, the monarchy lacked the fiscal and administrative underpinnings of which it had carelessly

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<sup>1</sup> *Pascal Ménoret: L'énigme saoudienne Paris -Gallimard 2003*

<sup>2</sup> *Pascal Ménoret: op cit.*

deprived itself. It could not buy social peace, and working and middle class unrest was the result. Saudi Arabia's wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few privileged individuals involved in a web of corruption. There was nothing left to feed, care for and educate the people and defend the country.

When Saudi Arabia's crisis began in the early 1980s, the Saud family was confronted with a new people. The young, literate, urbanized Saudis of 1980 had little in common with their forebears in 1950<sup>1</sup>. The tribal structure had lost its power, which was replaced by a restricted family solidarity. Collective property was outlawed between 1957 and 1968 and the nomadic tribes, forced to settle down, flocked to the cities. The urban population soared from 16% in 1950 to 85% in 2000. The tribes dissolved in the exodus but the families comprising them gained wages, health care and literacy, first for boys, then for girls. The adult literacy rate reached 83%<sup>2</sup>.

The Saudis of 1980 read the Koran from cover to cover whereas the previous generation only knew a few suras learned by heart. They wanted access to the consumer society that the princes and bourgeoisie had turned into a benchmark. That is precisely the moment when Saudi Arabia's first economic crisis hit. The volatility of oil prices in the 1980s directly affected the population, whose daily resources depended on the irregular rate at which petrodollars flowed into the country.

As the demographic transition got under way, with the fertility rate dropping by half in two decades, young people under 20 accounted for 60% of the population. Nearly half of all families lived below the poverty line, especially in the outlying provinces.

Young people were disoriented. They left school without professional training, deprived of the wellbeing they had been promised. They were receptive to the language and concepts of fundamentalist Islam taught by schoolteachers, often Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members in exile whose doctrine seamlessly dovetailed with Saudi Wahhabism. "Islamism is a revolt against the poor distribution of oil wealth", Pascal Ménoret wrote. The government was confronted by challenges based on the same religion it had instrumentalized with the ulemas' support to establish its power. Increasingly politicized intellectual movements, including a minority that drifted towards armed struggle, contested the official religion controlled by the monarchy. That is the political and religious maelstrom in which bin Laden found fertile ground.

On the eve of the crisis, a political trauma shook the monarchy's legitimacy to its foundations. In 1991 Saudi Arabia, incapable of defending itself against the threat of Saddam Hussein, asked the US army for help. This was the failure of a system of government that portrayed itself as the guardian of the sacred land where Islam was born and that must be kept free of military occupation by "infidels".

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *La Ceinture*, roman d'Ahmed Abodehman – Paris, Gallimard 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Percentage quoted by Amnesty International in its 2009 report.

In 1995 and 1996 Saudi Al Qaeda members attacked US soldiers, first in Riyadh, then at the Al Khobar army base, killing 25 Americans and wounding 700. They opened a 10-year period of insurrection that endangered the monarchy. From 2000 to 2002 assassinations of foreigners and senior regime figures were commonplace. From 2003 to 2007 Saudis with links to Al Qaeda tried to wage a veritable war on the security forces. Dozens of people were killed and hundreds wounded in the fighting. The insurgents' arsenals, found in several parts of the country, included metric tons of explosives, bombs, chemicals and RPG7 rocket-launchers. The security forces started gaining ground in 2007. When peace was restored in 2008, the Saudi interior minister put the estimated number of potential fighters at 10,000 and of sympathizers at one million. The monarchy took back control of the country but opposition persisted.

### ***B. THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE SAUDI REGIME***

The State seems to have restored its authority. Several factors have achieved that result.

First, foreign advisors have reorganized, trained and supported the security forces, which are now capable of infiltrating fighting cells in order to prevent attacks, combat urban guerilla warfare situations and, if necessary, step up repression against the insurgents.

Second, rising oil prices between 2000 and 2007 have enabled the monarchy to buy social peace. In addition, the number of partially fictional jobs has increased in the public sectors and Saudi and foreign employees have been required to hire Saudi nationals, depriving them of the possibility of employing seven million skilled, hard-working immigrants with no rights.

The government has also revived an economic diversification policy, subsidizing investments in the petrochemical, fertilizer, plastic, glass and aluminum industries, sectors where a country with plentiful cheap energy has a competitive edge. The policy has generated productive jobs.

The government has become aware of the risk posed by an education system that, from primary school to university, instills young people with archaic religious ideas that are very distant from the measured concepts of the great schools of theological and legal thought recognized throughout the Muslim world. New generations are more conservative than their parents. Young people are becoming more permeable to extremist ideas because they lack the skills to play a productive role in society.

The government has implemented a policy to re-educate "stray sheep", a term referring to arrested terrorists and jihadists back from Iraq. If the re-education is deemed successful, in other words if "brainwashing" produces the expected results and repentance is considered genuine, the "stray sheep" are released and receive financial aid, a job, a house and even a wife. Two thousand "stray sheep", or almost all the prisoners incarcerated for

terrorism, have been let out of jail. This policy, which borrows from Soviet or Chinese methods and combines them with paternalism, cares little about human rights. It fits in with a repressive system of imprisonment without charges, secrecy, systematic torture and degrading punishments such as flagellation. But it also helps reinsert Saudis who had turned towards violence, and the "stray sheep" receive better treatment than other prisoners in Saudi Arabia.

In a more strategic perspective, King Abdallah is trying to reform teaching programs and methods from primary school to university, and especially to develop professional and technical education. Some 30,000 Saudi students are currently training abroad. The king has met with fierce resistance from teachers and powerful militant Islamist universities in Medina and Riyadh as well as from a middle class that has been too recently urbanized to easily adjust to the constraints of salaried employment.

However, the policy has shown results. Pacification is widespread and Saudi Arabia is no longer in danger of destabilization. Will the situation be consolidated in the coming years so that a society can be built that, while keeping its originality, can offer its young people more fulfilling opportunities in the framework of the rule of law and prepare its economy for the day oil runs out?

### ***C. FUTURE PROSPECTS***

Saudi Arabia's future depends on political reforms, a better use of its assets and the ability to meet challenges whose importance it does not always seem to perceive.

The reforms started with a step intended to protect the royal family from the risks of a succession conflict that would weaken it. In 2006 King Abdallah set up a system of succession. An Allegiance Council in charge of designating the future king and crown prince was created.

After receiving an opinion from a medical commission, the Allegiance Council can declare that the king or crown prince is temporarily or permanently incapable of exercising power.

If the current heir to the throne, Prince Sultan, dies, the king would submit three names to replace him. The Allegiance Council can reject them and propose its own candidate. In the event of disagreement with the sovereign, the Allegiance Council must choose the crown prince by a secret ballot majority vote.

When King Abdallah dies the Allegiance Council will swear an oath to Prince Sultan, who will propose three candidates to succeed him as heir to the throne.

The people and the consultative body (Majlis al Shura) have no say in the process, which remains a family matter. The devolution system is just a

way to reach consensus in a divided family. When the time comes, will it withstand the inevitable struggle for power and settling of scores inherent to the succession to a coveted throne?

The rough outline of institutional reforms announced on February 13, 2009 has few structural innovations but many appointments likely to modify the kingdom's policies in every key ministry except foreign affairs, defense and the interior, which remain in the hands of the king's brothers.

One of the king's sons-in-law, a former senior intelligence officer, is in charge of education, demonstrating the desire to combat the most radical teachers, who are deemed responsible for thousands of young Saudis' joining the jihad. The appointment of the first female minister in charge of women's education, Noura Fayez, is a signal to misogynous conservatives but also, given her eminent qualities, the proof of a sincere desire to raise the level of girls' schooling. The government does not touch the personal status of women but gives the greatest number of young women the means to win their own emancipation.

The religious and judicial apparatuses have been purged of their most radical elements. Sheikh Ibrahim al-Ghaith, head of the commission of virtue and the prevention of vice, assisted by the much-feared religious police (the *motawwa*), was dismissed and replaced by the reputedly moderate Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Humaiyen. The head of the judicial supreme council, who had decreed that it was licit to kill the heads of allegedly immoral television networks, was also dismissed.

The Grand Ulema Commission's makeup takes the diversity of Saudi Islam into account (except Shiites). The four Sunni law schools are represented rather than just the Hanbalite school, which is the strictest.

The national assembly (Majlis al Shura) is still appointed but the king has drastically changed its composition. Seventy-nine of its 150 deputies have been replaced and members in their seventies have stepped down to make way for others in their forties. The new assembly includes representatives of the provinces, members of the main tribes and five Shiites, a minority that had been kept out of representative bodies until now.

The health and information ministries have been reorganized and a high administrative court and a Supreme Court created. Improvement of the health care system, more liberal regulation of information, control of the administration of justice and the establishment of the right of appeal are promising reforms.

Saudi Arabia's future also depends on making the most of its natural and human assets. It is twice as big as France and has 27 million people. The country has long kept to itself and does not take advantage of its strong points. Why couldn't Jeddah become a global trade hub like Dubai? After the failure of huge farms in the desert, why couldn't Saudi Arabia grow at least some of its food in the outlying regions conducive to agriculture and breeding, like



Asir? And why would the old maritime traditions of trade and fishing be doomed to fade away?

The monarchy has attempted to transform the economic rent economy into a manufacturing economy on several occasions. Those efforts must not be abandoned. Saudi Arabia has a comparative lead on products whose raw material is oil and for which it supplies cheap energy. But whichever way the country goes, it must train young people for jobs and increase the number of universities and technology institutes. It must also modify the social status of the seven million foreigners who make up the productive labor force and not treat them like second-class citizens, allowed them to be punished at their employer's will, abused in the privacy of families, or sentenced to flogging or beheading for minor offenses after a trial during which they understood nothing because they had no interpreter to assist them. Saudi officials must also implement attractive labor law for Saudis. Their society cannot develop without those prerequisites.

Saudi Arabia can and must accelerate the emancipation of women after new, archaic, misogynous laws to please the most reactionary Wahhabite ulemas took them backwards during the crisis of the 1980s. In 1964 King Faisal called out the National Guard to force open the first girl's school. King Abdallah has recently taken steps to further the advancement of Saudi women: they can travel inside and outside the country without being accompanied by a guardian and stay alone in hotels. That is the minimum freedom of movement necessary for businesswomen, who own 20,000 companies and concentrate 40% of the kingdom's wealth in their hands<sup>1</sup>.

Oil wealth is much better managed today: the Saudis have learned lessons from the backlash to the oil crises. The State budget is based on a minimum price per barrel. Investments focus on infrastructure, manufacturing and training.

For the moment, the government seems reluctant to consider some challenges. The royal family's place in Saudi Arabia's economic and political system will be challenged in the future. Is the army more capable of defending the country than in 1990 or will it remain above all an instrument of internal coercion? The government still seems to be relying on the United States to protect the country from dangers in the regional environment. It is worried about a nuclear Iran, but counts on the West to deal with the issue! Instead of actively backing the political forces capable of maintaining Iraq's cohesiveness and helping it rebuild, Saudi Arabia is still overly mistrustful of its important neighbor because of its traditional hostility to Shiites. Now that its checkbook diplomacy has failed in Yemen, the Saudi government is trying to build an electronic wall to stop smuggling and illegal immigration. It would probably be more useful to give the Yemenis a breath of fresh air by restoring the century-old migration of labor that was interrupted in 1991 and has resumed with a trickle since then. The Saudi regime has consolidated itself, recovered

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<sup>1</sup> *Figures quoted by Saudi sociologist Mona El Mounajeed.*

control of its hinterland and restored its prestige abroad. However, it might be feared that one day the monarchical political system will be caught by surprise if it does not adjust to changes in society. Saudi Arabia is doing much better but many Saudis are not.

## **II. THE GULF: ANOTHER FACE OF THE ARAB WORLD**

The States on the Persian Gulf rim, which have been masters of their fate for less than 40 years, are an interesting case of accelerated development. In four decades they have made the transition from traditional societies to breathtaking modernity illustrated by futurist architecture, big, impressive cities and, especially, integration into the global economy.

However, the Gulf countries' social and politic situation is changing at a snail's pace. The idea of equality between human beings is still foreign and hard to apply. There is serious discrimination in the indigenous population. For example, Bahrain's discontented Shiite majority violently demonstrates every week against the poor infrastructure in their neighborhoods and exclusion from public jobs. In Kuwait, there is no comparison between the city-dwellers' luxurious living conditions and the Bedouins' poverty in outlying areas.

Everywhere, women have inferior legal and social status, although in practice they enjoy a freedom unimaginable in neighboring Saudi Arabia.

The situation of foreign workers is the focal point of the clash between ardently desired modernity and inherited archaic traditions. Foreign labor builds the infrastructure in these countries, where native-born people only account for 20% of the total population. What's more, in the United Arab Emirates, for example, 15% of the citizens are unemployed. Senior and midlevel managers form a class recalling the metics in ancient Athens. During the limited time of their residency, the living and working conditions of Asian immigrants, who work as domestics or laborers, are close to serfdom. Workers, victims of dishonest recruitment agencies, deprived of their passports and entirely subjected to the goodwill of their employers, who can have them expelled, end up revolting. In the construction industry in particular, the lack of security, which causes many deadly accidents, unhealthy housing and poor food have sparked demonstrations leading to harsh crackdowns, arrests, imprisonment and expulsions. Imposing those social conditions on men who are building museums and universities symbolizes the clash between future goals and present means.

It is very hard to make the transition from a feudal, patriarchal society to a representative democracy in just a few decades. Moreover, Kuwait is the only Gulf State with a parliament that has any real power and is elected by universal suffrage. Two women became members during the last elections. But the structural conflict between the monarchy, which appoints the prime

minister, and the parliament, which cannot vote him out of office, combined with the prohibition of political parties, reduces the assembly to nothing more than a place of clashing special interests. The result is severe political instability and an immobility that sets Kuwait apart from the other Gulf States.

In 2005 the United Arab Emirates set up a 40-member consultative council, half of which is appointed and the other half elected by 6,689 great electors. This body, which is not very democratic, is locally considered a major advance, especially since Kuwait is viewed as an example of what not to do: representative democracy generates immobility, it is said.

A comparison between the situation of migrant workers in France or the United States and the plight of Pakistanis in the Emirates should be taken with a grain of salt. Between the start of the French Revolution and the establishment of truly universal suffrage in France, 157 years went by. The Gulf States have made substantial political and social strides in less than two generations. The West's condescending attitude towards these new States harms their evolution and mutually profitable relations.

Spectacular skyscrapers, huge hotels and fast highways must not necessarily be considered the markers of an authentic modernization. Architectural and urban planning choices and non-choices have had a devastating impact on the region's ecology in the past 20 years. Dubai is one of the most alarming examples. The construction of artificial islands in a closed sea like the Persian Gulf has destroyed the fragile ecosystems that assured the water's regeneration. The lack of a wastewater collection and processing network suitable for an area with extremely dense population density has led to massive discharges of polluted water into the sea. The brine that desalination plants discharge also has devastating effects on the ecosystem, and will increase as the demand for drinking water rises. Moreover, buildings that are hundreds of meters tall consume a tremendous amount of energy. As the Gulf States prepare for a world without oil, they have opted for an ecologically disastrous urban development model requiring a considerable consumption of energy. Meanwhile, the IAEA says it takes approximately 15 years for an inexperienced country to accede to safe nuclear power. The Gulf States' architectural modernity is more a threat to their own future than the sign that they are keeping up with the contemporary world.

On the other hand, the Gulf States' ability to react to the global economy's ups and downs; setting aside of petrodollars in sovereign funds such as the United Arab Emirates' ADIA, capable of investing for the benefit of future generations; desire to become the "world's aviation hub", train young people in top universities and build prestigious museums that are beacons of world culture; and decision to diversify the economy and develop the research sector and cutting-edge technologies, attest to a visionary spirit.

The global financial and economic crisis has obviously affected the Gulf States: energy export revenues have fallen, the value of bank assets has melted and the construction and tourism industries have slowed down. These

countries may be in the midst of a long recession. But the IMF says if the Middle East's oil-exporting countries are convinced that oil prices will be low for a long time, they will probably cut their spending to preserve their fiscal viability. In fact, the more these countries' banking systems were integrated into the international system before the crisis, the more they will suffer, like the Western countries. That is the case of Dubai. The downside of its open economy is permeability to the global crisis.

However, the examples of Abu Dhabi or Qatar show that the Gulf States have consolidated their position enough in less than 40 years to pursue their long-term modernization despite the downturn. Economic diversification is well under way: the share of hydrocarbons has dropped from 70% to 35% of GDP in 20 years. Steel, aluminum and petrochemicals form the core of their industrialization. Dubai has started creating world-class telecom, information technology, health and biotechnology research clusters. Everywhere—in Dubai of course, but also in Qatar or Bahrain—financial services are increasingly contributing to the production of wealth.

The intellectual and cultural components of the region's development plans must be considered, in particular by France, as one of the most promising aspects of the trends under way. Abu Dhabi or Qatar expect the same dynamism from France on those cooperation projects as they do for defense cooperation and the negotiation of major trade deals.

Unfortunately, unlike British or American institutions of higher learning, the international policies of French universities and *grandes écoles* are not dynamic or coordinated enough. Sometimes they cannot even manage to respond to requests from the emirs themselves, the Emir of Qatar told a rapporteur during an interview. The Saint-Cyr military academy did answer a request from Qatar and a project should be set up soon. Abu Dhabi has signed a contract with the Sorbonne including an exclusivity clause for the region, so Paris IV must really invest in the creation of a veritable department of literature, which so far seems stalled at the language course stage. Paris I, which is part of the Sorbonne, has not been able to set up a law school in Bahrain because of the exclusivity granted to Abu Dhabi. The project of training lawyers in the emirate should be revived so that the Sorbonne, even if it is subdivided into several institutions jealous of their autonomy, lives up to its universalistic outlook and beautiful name of university.

The Abu Dhabi Louvre Museum participates in the emirate's plan of opening up to the world. Without going into the controversy the project sparked in France or passing judgment on the players and their motives, the rapporteurs believe it is an honor for our country to be present in a group of museums that will display universal works of art in a key region in the East. Millions of Arabs and Asians will pass through Abu Dhabi and live there. Their ability to see works that France has collected and the emirate will acquire with the help of France-Museum can only foster the spread of culture and understanding between peoples.

However, the Gulf States face an uncertain future. Seven emirates have formed a federation dominated by the richest one, Abu Dhabi, which has just shown its sense of responsibility by propping up the imprudent Dubai in the international financial crisis. Bahrain, Qatar and Oman have kept their independence but forged alliances within the CCASG. All of them feel threatened by their powerful neighbor Iran. These countries' small sizes and populations, presence of Shiite minorities (who are in the majority in Bahrain) even though Sunnis hold power, and dependency on foreign managers and workers to administer them and create wealth are factors of weakness. The energy-consuming Western countries have an interest in participating in their military defense as well as in their modernization through cultural cooperation and institutional assistance.



## **CHAPTER VI - FRANCE AND EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

### **I. FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY**

France's postwar foreign policy has had three priorities: the construction of Europe, alliance with the United States and evolution of the Middle East, which has ceaselessly captured French diplomats' attention because the country has such a wide range of important interests in that part of the world.

France, like the West as a whole, must address the Arab-Israeli conflict in its relations with all the Middle East countries except Iran. France's attitude towards the conflict may shape its image in the Arab world and influence its relations with all the region's countries, but it also has other interests and pursues other objectives. Aside from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is a good idea to distinguish between three geographical areas, each with its own set of issues: Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, where France has an old presence; Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries (the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain); Iran and Iraq, which have Shiite majorities.

#### ***A. THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT***

During the Fourth Republic France broke with its "Arab policy" dating to Bonaparte's Egypt expedition and decided to back Israel, even becoming the Jewish State's main arms supplier and helping it acquire nuclear weapons.

General de Gaulle changed course after becoming president in 1958. After Israel won the Six Day War in June 1967 the French government said that "*no fait accompli*" would be accepted as final, ending the period of close ties between Paris and Tel Aviv. On November 22, 1967 France voted for Security Council resolution 242, which established the right of all the region's States to exist, including Israel, but summoned Israel to pull out of the occupied territories. At a press conference on November 27, 1967, President de Gaulle criticized Jews as "an elitist, swaggering and domineering people". He justified the shift in French policy by saying it was a return to its historic roots and announced that closer ties with the Arabs "must be one of the fundamental bases of our foreign policy today".

Every president has followed the Gaullist pro-Arab line since then.

Under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing France voted for the PLO's admission to United Nations, sparking an outcry in Israel. In 1975 he let the PLO open an office in Paris. Five years later he pressured his European

partners into accepting the Venice Declaration, which proclaimed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination for the first time.

François Mitterrand, who thought Giscard's policy was too pro-Arab, set out to revive Franco-Israeli relations during his first term. He was the first French president to visit Israel and address the Knesset, on March 4, 1982, but quickly returned to the traditional line after June 6, 1982 when, while hosting the G7 in Versailles, Israel invaded Lebanon, roughing up the UNIFIL on the way. France condemned the invasion and helped evacuate Palestinians from besieged Beirut. France, the United States and Italy set up the Multinational Interposition Force (MIF), which helped move 15,000 Palestinian fighters to northern Lebanon. It was after the MIF left that Lebanese Christian militias massacred Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in September 1982.

The Lebanese pitfall, with its hostages and terrorists attacks, some of which even occurred on French soil, combined with the Gulf War, prompted Mitterrand to disengage from the Middle East and temporarily end the Arab policy. Foreign minister Roland Dumas blamed the Arabs. "Evoking the Arab world is one myth," he said. "An Arab policy is another."<sup>1</sup>

When Jacques Chirac became president in May 1995 he shifted France's Middle East policy back to its traditional line. In an August 1996 speech at Cairo's Al Hassam University he said, "France's Arab policy must be an essential dimension of its foreign policy. I want to give it a new thrust in line with the course set by the man who initiated it, General de Gaulle..."

The principles Chirac spelled out in Cairo—non-interference by the great powers, affirmation of the independence of peoples and use of regional bodies—had two goals: moving the Arab-Israeli peace process forward and establishing a Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which led to the Barcelona process.

A rash of anti-Semitic acts in France starting in 2000, when the second Intifada broke out, undermined Chirac's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sharon's government harshly criticized France, even accusing the French of anti-Semitism. In 2003 Chirac felt obliged to visit the United States to meet the major American Jewish organizations. He also appointed a roving ambassador "in charge of the international dimension of the Shoah, despoliations and the duty to remember" as well as a new French ambassador to Israel.

But it was not much use. Since the 1960s the Arab capitals and the Palestinians have expected a solution to their conflict with Israel to come from Washington, not Paris or Brussels. To the bitter end France continued to recognize Yasser Arafat as the Palestinians' representative and its diplomats visited him in his Muqata'a residence in Israeli-besieged Ramallah. It even offered him medical treatment in his final days. None of that mattered: the

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Dumas, *Le Monde*, March 12, 1991.



Palestinians expected the United States, not France, to break the deadlock, which illustrates the limits of diplomacy based on emotions and personal relationships.

Heeding the lessons of his predecessor's successes and failures, President Nicolas Sarkozy sought more balance in Israel's favor in order to become an honest broker. He wanted French diplomacy to play a bigger role and have a wider audience.

The shift was based on the observation that, although France is well-liked, the country was not considered a possible peacemaker because it did not have Israel's ear. Sarkozy therefore sought closer ties with the Jewish State, becoming the second French president to address the Knesset, in June 2008, when he delivered a balanced speech recalling the constants of French policy. "I have come to tell you that the French people will always stand by the State of Israel's side when its existence is threatened," he said. "We owe our friends the truth; otherwise we are not friends. The truth is that Israel's security, on which France will never compromise, will never be truly assured until we see an independent, modern, democratic and viable Palestinian State by its side."

Foreign affairs minister Bernard Kouchner played an active part in this policy of closer ties. The Gaza tragedy in late 2008 revealed the brutality of the Israeli army and the cynicism of its leaders. The elections in Israel brought to power a prime minister who refused to recognize the Palestinians' right to a State. Since then, and despite professions of friendship, French policy towards Israel has hesitated.

### ***B. FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN LEBANON, SYRIA AND EGYPT***

France's historic, emotional ties to Lebanon are old, important and well known.

In the 1990s France found itself "trapped" in Lebanon, which had become a bone of contention between Israel, supported by the United States, Syria, backed by the USSR, and Iran, which instrumentalized the Amal militia before throwing its weight behind Hezbollah. France's position in favor of Lebanon's independence led to an unprecedented wave of attacks, including the assassination of ambassador Louis Delamare in Beirut on September 4, 1981 by Lebanese from the Shiite party Amal, probably on Teheran's instructions; the rue des Rosiers attack on August 9, 1982; and the suicide attack on the Drakkar building in Beirut that took the lives of 58 French soldiers (241 US soldiers were killed the same day).

François Mitterrand, aware that France faced hostility from Syria on because of Lebanon, Iran because of its support for Iraq, and Libya because of its Chad policy, not to mention the tension that continuously beset its relations with Israel, opted for a disengagement from Lebanon in particular and the Middle East in general. France played only a limited role in drafting the 1990

Taif accords, which ended the Lebanon war and consecrated the legitimacy of Syria's control over that country.

Under Jacques Chirac's presidency, France froze its diplomatic relations with Syria after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Today French relations with Lebanon are excellent. France perseveres in its attachment to international legality and to the Lebanese State, which alone possesses the legitimate power to use force. But it has also taken note of the importance of Hezbollah, which has become a fixture on Lebanon's political landscape while at the same time developing its military capacities.

France has had strong ties with Syria since 1946, but the dialogue was often strained owing to the two countries' positions on Lebanon. That was particularly the case in 2004 and even more so in 2005 with Rafik Hariri's assassination, which Syria's leaders are suspected of having masterminded.

President Sarkozy decided to revive the dialogue, which nearly damaged France's relations with Saudi Arabia. When President Bashar el-Assad attended the Bastille Day parade on July 14, 2008, and President Sarkozy visited Damascus, it helped end Syria's diplomatic isolation.

Today it looks as though Sarkozy's bold strategy has paid off, as the appointment of a United States ambassador to Damascus and the resumption of dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Syria attest.

France's relations with Egypt are less passionate than with Lebanon or Syria, but cultural, scientific and technical cooperation, which mainly focuses on promoting French and training elites, date back a long time and is qualitatively significant. In addition to hosting several thousand students in France, Franco-Egyptian cooperation is based on a French presence in Egypt's greatest universities and on the Université française d'Égypte.

Egyptian diplomacy's active involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, combined with a broad convergence of views between French and Egyptian leaders, make Cairo an ally and partner in the region.

### ***C. FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF***

France did not start developing a presence on the Arabian Peninsula until the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who visited the Gulf countries in 1980. Those States are new: Kuwait was created in 1961, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman in 1971.

President Chirac, whose policy was marked by a strong personal relationship with Saudi Arabia's King Abdallah, continued in that direction.

Since 1996 France and Saudi Arabia have had a "strategic partnership". Dialogue is often based on a convergence of views, flowering trade and scientific and technical development cooperation. France sells more

arms to Saudi Arabia than it does to any other country and is its third-leading weapons supplier.

France's special relationship with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is based on the "global strategic partnership" President Chirac initiated in 1997, which includes a defense accord and extensive cultural cooperation illustrated by the "Louvre Abu Dhabi" project. Trade is thriving, making the UAE France's main partner in the Gulf. The recent construction of Abu Dhabi's naval base and the concession of army and air force bases strengthen the relationship. France also has excellent ties with Bahrain and Qatar, as the "Saint Cyr-Qatar" military academy project attests. However, bilateral relations with Kuwait are not as good as they should be, despite official visits, diplomatic efforts and the conclusion of scientific and technical cooperation accords in higher education (Institut Français du pétrole, HEC, IEP, etc.).

#### ***D. FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS IRAN AND IRAQ***

The history of Franco-Iraqi relations started with the Aref brothers, Iraq's presidents in the 1960s, and not, as is commonly believed, with Saddam Hussein's and Jacques Chirac's mutual declarations of friendship in 1974. That is when France developed an overtly pro-Iraqi policy, building the "Osiraq" nuclear research reactor and selling Baghdad Mirage F1 jets. President Mitterrand pursued the policy. Like all the Western States, France backed Iraq when it attacked Iran in 1980. Three years later France even loaned Iraq five Super-Étendard planes armed with Exocet missiles that hit the Kharg oil terminal.

In August 1990 France sharply condemned the invasion of Kuwait and actively participated in the anti-Iraqi coalition forces during the Gulf War, which led to the two countries' breaking diplomatic relations.

In reality, France's policy was always favorable to Iraq, which, in the eyes of Paris<sup>1</sup>, looked secular and republican. In 1995 Paris managed to have a UN resolution passed allowing Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil to buy food and medicine. Three years later the country played an important part in the crisis over UN inspectors' access to sites that may have housed prohibited weapons. The whole world remembers France's efforts to prevent the Iraq War, which was started without United Nations approval.

In May 2003 Paris voted for resolution 1483 ending 13 years of sanctions and giving US-UK forces control of Iraq's economy and political future. In July 2004 diplomatic relations were restored at the ambassador level.

In December 2005 France signed an accord to forgive four billion euros of Iraq's debt. In August 2007 Bernard Kouchner became the first Western foreign affairs minister to Iraq, which he did again in May 2008,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Jean-Pierre Chevènement: Le vert et le noir - Paris Grasset 1995*

followed in February 2009 by President Sarkozy, who announced that French companies would soon be back. French cooperation has become steadier and more diversified: training elites, supporting and preserving Iraqi culture, humanitarian aid, etc. The opening of a French embassy office in Erbil will complete France's diplomatic representation in Iraq.

France's relations with Iran have been more chaotic.

Before the Islamic Revolution France had good relations with the Shah's regime. In 1975 Iran asked Framatome to build five nuclear power plants and acquired a stake in Eurodif, a company created to produce enriched uranium. But the contract's revocation by the Bakhtiar government in 1979 and the advent of the Islamic Republic jeopardized Franco-Iranian relations.

Despite the Iranians' warm feelings towards France for having welcomed Ayatollah Khomeiny and the Pahlavi regime's opponents, the new government did not give it any privileges. After the Revolution successive waves of refugees arrived in France, straining relations between the two countries. Former prime minister Shapour Bakhtiar was the first refugee whose extradition the Islamic Republic requested. Iranian secret services tried to assassinate him in 1980 and succeeded in 1991.

In 1981 relations between the Socialist government and the Iranian theocracy were strained. The next year President Mitterrand refused to apply the Eurodif accord and to supply Iran with uranium. In retaliation Teheran demanded the repayment of a billion-dollar loan from the Shah. Iranian opposition leaders, particularly the People's Muhajedeen and Bani Sadr, started taking refuge in France in 1981.

France backed Iraq during its war with Iran, triggering a violent reaction from Teheran, including hostage-taking in Lebanon and terrorist attacks on French soil. In 1987 France took action to counter terrorists and broke off diplomatic relations until 1988.

After the Gulf War the European Community countries, especially France, sought to adopt a policy that would be more independent of the United States. France objected to the 1996 D'Amato-Kennedy Act, which aimed to sanction companies trading with "rogue States", including Iran, with which Total had concluded a drilling contract the previous year.

The European countries tried to restore dialogue with Iran when Mohammad Khatami became president. In August 1998 French foreign minister Hubert Védrine went to Teheran and formally invited Khatami to France, but the visit never took place.

Today the European Union accounts for over half of Iran's foreign trade but France's share is negligible compared to Germany's. In 2003 France and Iran signed an accord protecting and promoting investments.

The current crisis over Iran's nuclear program could seriously damage economic ties between Europe and Iran.

## **II. EUROPE'S PRESENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

People often lament "the absence of Europe" in Middle East affairs. Put that way, their complaint is a poor reflection of a paradoxical reality. Europe is the Middle East's leading economic partner, importing over 50% of its oil from that part of the world; accounts for 35% of Israel's foreign trade; and covers most of the Palestinian government's financial needs. Europe is an economic and financial powerhouse in the region in every way, but surprisingly weak politically. Several reasons account for that.

First, it took a long time for Europe to develop the political institutions necessary to formulate and implement a foreign policy. The Lisbon Treaty will help fill that gap when it enters into force. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will have the economic and financial clout to make Europe's voice heard.

The second cause of the European Union's political weakness is divisions between Europeans, which were never more openly expressed as during the US intervention in Iraq. France, Germany and Belgium sharply condemned the invasion, while central Europe's new democracies approved it and Great Britain participated militarily. The Iraq episode showed that the Europeans' divisions had less to do with conflicting analyses of the Middle East's problems than with the closeness of their ties with the United States.

The third cause is that, as a community, Europe has no military teeth to back up its policy on the ground. France, Italy, Great Britain and, more recently, Germany have the means but they cannot compare with those of the United States. Europe as an entity is militarily non-existent.

Lastly, neither the United States nor Israel has ever agreed to let Europe participate in talks between Tel Aviv and the Palestinians, which lie at the heart of the region's political problems.

In those conditions, Europe's involvement in the Middle East has taken two forms. First, on several occasions it has adopted positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that are often at odds with United States policy.

Second, in the belief that forging economic ties would bring Europe and the Arab world closer together, it has set up and funded cooperation structures with countries south of the Mediterranean.

### ***A. EUROPE AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT***

The idea of a Euro-Arab dialogue dates back to the Arab States' reaction to the Six Day War. Using oil as a weapon, they forced Europe to take a position on the Arab-Israeli conflict and open up what everybody agreed to call the "Euro-Arab dialogue". It was a relationship between groups, not

States, which allowed the Arab League in Dublin in 1975 to request that the PLO be associated.

Of course, the groups had different priorities. The Arabs wanted the Europeans to make a stronger commitment to Palestinian rights whereas the Europeans wanted to ensure a steady supply of oil.

### **1. The Venice Declaration**

The 1980 Venice Declaration was an essential step in the construction of a common European position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It stated that "the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination." The text had a considerable impact. US officials did not hide their hostility. Israel called it lop-sidedly pro-Arab. Venice was likened to Munich and Israel to Czechoslovakia. The Jewish State accused Europe of raising an "organization of murderers"—the PLO—to the rank of peace negotiators.

Oil prices soared after the Iranian Revolution swept Ayatollah Khomeini to power, putting the Venice Declaration and the Euro-Arab dialogue on hold.

The European countries registered no significant reaction to Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the first Intifada in 1987 or the Palestinian National Council's proclamation of a Palestinian State on November 15, 1988. The 1991 Gulf War underscored their military weakness. They would not have been able to restore Kuwait's sovereignty alone. That is one reason why the United States left Europe out of the ensuing Arab-Israeli peace process.

The 1991 Madrid peace conference opened without European participation. The talks quickly moved to Washington on account of deep divisions between the Palestinian and Israeli delegations. In September 1992 PLO officials and close associates of Shimon Peres began talking to each other in Oslo. The meetings were a Norwegian, not a European, diplomatic initiative. In April 1994 and June 1995 the European Community backed the peace process but limited its action to the economic level.

In 1996 the Union named a **special envoy to Palestine**, Spanish ambassador Miguel-Angel Moratinos. The decision was made in the framework of the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (ECFSP).

In February 1997 the 15-member **European Union and the PLO** signed an **interim association accord**, which formalized the Union's financial commitment to the Palestinian Authority.

## **2. The Berlin Declaration**

In March 1999 the **Berlin Declaration** picked up where the Venice Declaration left off but in clearer, more straightforward language. It "reaffirms the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state and looks forward to the early fulfillment of this right." Nevertheless, the European Union met Israel's request to postpone recognition of a Palestinian State. Meanwhile, the same year the 15 Member States pursued their economic cooperation with the region by approving the 10<sup>th</sup> convention between the Union and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Work Agency), which implements the UN program to help Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The United States invasion of Iraq in March 2003 divided Europeans: France, Germany and Belgium opposed the intervention, but the British prime minister and the new democracies in the East supported it. US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld added fuel to the fire by making a distinction between "old" and "new" Europe. The European countries split into two camps depending on their support or opposition to the policy of the United States and, consequently, Israel.

Hamas's unquestionable victory in the January 2006 legislative elections placed the European Union's 25 Member States on the horns of a dilemma: either recognize the results of an election they encouraged and monitored (900 international observers attested that they were free and fair), in other words acknowledge the victory of Hamas, which they put on the list of terrorist organizations in December 2001, or ignore the results, contradicting the democratic principles they affirm and seek to promote.

The choice became tougher in July and August 2006 when Israel invaded Lebanon as part of a war against "Islamist terrorist organizations". On August 1, 2006 the European Union's 25 foreign affairs ministers could not conceal their disagreements and failed to call for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon, underscoring their inability to agree on a common foreign policy.

### ***B. TRANS-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION***

From the 1990s to 2003 several initiatives were floated to try and forge closer ties between countries on both sides of the Mediterranean.

In 1990 a "**5 + 5 dialogue**" took place after foreign affairs ministers met in Rome. The aim was to launch a regional cooperation process in the western Mediterranean between Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Malta on the northern side and the Arab Maghreb Union's five countries on the southern side. After the first two meetings (Rome in 1990 and Algiers in 1991) the Member States agreed on an ambitious investment program but events relating to Algeria's legislative elections and suspicion of Libya's involvement in the Lockerbie bombing froze the dialogue for 10 years (1991-2001).

In November 1995 the Euro-Mediterranean partnership project was revived in Barcelona. Known as the "**Barcelona process**", it associated the 15 Member States the European Union had at the time with partners on the Mediterranean's southern and eastern rim. The goal was to set up a free-trade zone, boost financial aid and increase technical and administrative assistance in order to establish an "area of shared prosperity". The partnership was based on foreign policy, security, economic, financial, social, cultural and human foundations. The European Union signed bilateral and asymmetrical trade accords with each Mediterranean country, first in 1995 with Tunisia and Israel, which absorb nearly 50% of its exports in the Mediterranean basin, then with Morocco (1995), the Palestinian Authority (1996) and the other Arab countries.

But the Barcelona process gradually got bogged down. The November 2000 Marseille meeting revealed how hard it would be for the European Union to set up coherent economic aid programs when Arab governments were reluctant to make difficult economic changes and criticized it for dodging thorny political issues by focusing on the partnership's economic dimension. The Europeans recalled that the Barcelona process and the Middle East peace process were meant to complement rather than compete with one another. For the Arab partners, solving the Palestinian problem was the *sine qua non* for closer ties with the West.

In 2003 the European Commission proposed a new concept, "**neighborhood**", defined in the following manner: "the European Union strives to create a space of prosperity and good neighborliness, a circle of friends, characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation." Officially, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) does not replace but strengthens the Barcelona process.

President Sarkozy tried to breathe new life into the moribund Euro-Arab dialogue by setting up the "Union for the Mediterranean", which would have extended and renewed the Barcelona process.

Major projects included a clean-up of the Mediterranean, sea lanes, roads, civil protection, solar energy, university education, research and business development. The main stumbling block in setting up the projects' management structures was the Arab League's insistence on participating at every consultation and decision-making level. The Arab States did not want to face the European Union without a common line, which would have thrown the dialogue off balance. Meanwhile, Israel objected to the Arab League's participation.

A list of specific actions replaced the initial integration concept. The policy, which emerged during the European Union's eastward expansion, failed to win support from the countries south of the Mediterranean, which wanted a clearer political commitment from the Union.

President Sarkozy thought he could avoid a stalemate by emphasizing specific projects. He was wrong. To overcome the deadlock at the Marseille



meeting it would have been necessary to set up pointlessly cumbersome structures and five deputy secretary-general posts, including one for Israel, and to allow the Arab League to take part in every meeting. In addition, the secretary-general's post was not filled. It was intended for Tunisia, but that country declined when the Union rejected its request to move the headquarters to Tunis and kept it in Barcelona instead.

The Union for the Mediterranean has been dormant since the Gaza tragedy in 2008. Arab governments accuse Europe of buying themselves a good conscience by proposing development projects because it lacks the courage to take a clear stand on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The planned initiatives are on hold. The UFM is not dead and the stalemate does not spell the end of Euro-Mediterranean projects, but there is a palpable sense of unease. The deterioration of the Israeli-Palestinian situation prevents the Arab governments from persevering because it would put them at odds with their public opinion.

On the sidelines of trans-Mediterranean cooperation, the Union and Israel have started talks on liberalizing services and air links between them and recently concluded talks on farm produce, fishing and processed agricultural products. In late 2007 the Israeli government asked the European Union to recognize a "special status" in the framework of the European Neighbor Policy. Israel would like to participate in several community policies and programs to strengthen technological and trade cooperation, as well as in Council meetings on the economy, environment, energy and security. Despite the parliament's opposition, the association council's eighth meeting, which took place on June 16, 2008 in the framework of the 1995 association accord, approved Israel's request to beef up its partnership with Europe but its entry into force was delayed after Israel's dramatic invasion of Gaza.

The European Union's foreign policy basically amounts to checkbook diplomacy. It is the Palestinian territories' main financial backer. In 2005 its total aid stood at €280 million, or over €500 million if the various Member States' bilateral assistance is taken into account. In September 2005, after Israel's unilateral pullout from Gaza, the European Commission granted €60 million in aid, most of it for rebuilding infrastructure, improving water supplies, upgrading power grids and repairing roads. In 2007 European Union aid to the Palestinian territories stood at €61 million (nearly a billion euros if bilateral assistance is added) and €493 million in 2008. In June 2009 the Commission earmarked €38 million euros to fund two important mechanisms. The first involves the EUBAN-Rafah mission, which was initially intended to ensure security at the Rafah checkpoint on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. Israeli aircraft destroyed the mission's facilities and its staff is currently in Ashkelon. The rapporteurs met its officials, who are still waiting. The second is the EUPOL COPPS mission set up in late 2005 to train the Palestinian Authority police. In 2003 both missions were put under the responsibility of the European Union's special envoy to the

Middle East, Marc Otte, who replaced Miguel Angel Moratinos and whom the rapporteurs met.

**In conclusion, the Europeans will find interlocutors willing to talk to them as long as they limit their ambitions to large amounts of financial aid. But if they are more demanding about receiving political concessions in return, they will meet with a blunt refusal. The reason is simple: why would Arabs, Iranians or Israelis deal with the European Union if its political line is unclear and tangled in the contradictions of 27 national agendas?**

## **CHAPTER VII - RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some European countries wonder whether it is worthwhile to have an active foreign policy in the Middle East and, if so, in which framework it should be conducted. Is it better for the European Union to pursue a single, but ineffective policy, or should each country strike out on its own diplomatic course? France is directly concerned by this question.

### **I. WHAT FRAMEWORK FOR WHICH POLICY?**

#### ***A. IS ACTIVE MIDDLE EAST DIPLOMACY NECESSARY?***

The question might seem incongruous for France or England, which have had close ties with the Middle East for at least two centuries, but not for the other European countries.

Italy, which had four maritime republics, was the first and for a long time only point of contact between the Christian West and the Muslim East. "With the exception of Venice and a few Frenchmen, nobody in Europe understands anything about the question of the Orient," Michelet wrote in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Today it would be hard to define Italy's Middle East policy in a few words, except for its decisive contribution to the new UNIFIL and participation in the coalition forces during the Iraq War.

Germany has deliberately stayed out of Middle East affairs until now, but is it worse off than France? Today German diplomacy in the Middle East seems to be coming out of its stupor. That is good news for Europe, although the Federal Republic feels more comfortable negotiating with Iran than with Israel.

The European Union's new members in the East had little diplomatic contact with the Middle East during the Soviet period.

In "old Europe", the Netherlands give the impression of limiting their Middle East policy to unconditional support for Israel.

Each country may have its own history and inclinations, but Europe in general and France in particular cannot remain indifferent to what happens in the Middle East. This is not a question of international prestige or a matter of economic interests involving each country's energy needs, market size or exports.

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<sup>1</sup> Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, le XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle, tome II. Quoted by Paul Balta in *La politique arabe et musulmane de la France, Confluences Méditerranée*, n° 22, summer 1997.

It is a question of security for Europe, which wants to be and thinks of itself as a peaceful power whose natural interest is to have the best possible relations with its neighbor, the Muslim world. France knows by experience that certain foreign policy choices in the Middle East can have a high price.

For Europeans the Middle East is simply a question of vital interests because what happens there influences everyday life in our countries, which is not the case in the United States, Canada or the other Western nations. Harmony between Western and Eastern civilizations is particularly important in the ongoing construction of our countries. France has five million Muslims and 500,000 Jews (Europe's second-biggest Jewish community and the world's second-biggest after the United States). But it is also true for the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain. France's Middle East foreign policy starts with parliament and the laws it passes. There is no doubt that a law on the burqa would influence how France is perceived in that part of the world.

In addition to the European nations' cohesion, the Middle East raises the question of building a wider Euro-Mediterranean space, which contains the seeds of the Union for the Mediterranean. It would be a shame if the UFM became a useless institution or a gimmick: it could be a great project for Europe. There are obvious economic complementarities between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Together we are responsible for turning them into comparative advantages to face the emergence of India or Asia. It is important for the future of Europe and France to have an active Middle East policy.

## ***B. WHAT IS THE BEST FRAMEWORK?***

The **Quartet** associating the United Nations, the United States, Russia and Europe seemed like a good idea. Unfortunately, it has actually turned out to be inoperative, if not dangerous. As we have seen in the part of this report on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the conditions the Quartet posed in 2006 to dialogue with Hamas were an obstacle on the road to peace. Where was Tony Blair after the Gaza tragedy? If we want the Quartet to serve a purpose, it is absolutely imperative to make it more operational.

The **European Union** offers the ideal framework of intervention because it is potentially the most powerful, but unfortunately, for the moment it is ineffective. Two paradoxes characterize Europe's intervention in the Middle East: Europe pays the most but has the least influence; its positions on the Middle East are far more advanced than those of the present US administration but it has received no credit for them.

The change in the US administration's positions makes it easier for the Europeans to bring their views closer together. All the European countries that had a very pro-Israel position because of their support for the Bush administration, such as the Netherlands and the Eastern European nations, today find themselves on the wrong foot, while the evolution of France's

policy and its closer ties with Israel facilitates things. The ideal would be to find a consensus on the European level. If the Irish adopt the Lisbon Treaty by referendum, its entry into force would probably be a favorable factor<sup>1</sup>.

But even with the Lisbon Treaty, the definition of a European foreign policy in a framework that is still not federal will continue coming up against current limits, including the lack of a common vision between the member countries and the delicate coexistence of an embryonic European defense and a domineering Atlantic alliance. Europe is powerless to act in the Middle East because it is not a State and has neither the means to define a policy that would be anything more than the smallest common denominator, nor the external instruments of power: an army and a diplomacy.

What can be done? Wait for the United States of Europe to define a foreign policy in the Middle East?

Obviously not. No great European country ever renounced its own national ambitions when it had them. That is the case of France and Great Britain in particular.

**While waiting for a federal Europe that may never exist, a few European countries must closely cooperate with each other in order to act and define a Middle East policy.**

**Instead of shuttling back and forth between Tel Aviv, Gaza, Cairo Washington or Brussels, our diplomats should try to define the main lines of a common European Middle East policy in London, Berlin, Madrid, Rome and a few other European capitals.**

**Of course, that is no easy task and the fact that each country holds elections at different times does not help matters any. But the search for a European line of action that is more than a minimum consensus must be our foreign policy's top priority.**

If a structured group of countries succeed in having a clearly defined policy, **it would be indispensable to associate Turkey**, whose skillful, effective diplomacy in the Middle East for two decades furthers the cause of peace. That is no coincidence. Europe and Turkey need peace more than others because the Middle East is their neighbor. In that perspective, it would be profitable to **associate Turkey in talks with Iran.**

Of course, the **Euro-Turkish group would have to consult with the United States.** That seems more within reach than ever. It would be regrettable not to take advantage of the convergence between American and European policies. Associating Russia and China, which is increasingly present in the Middle East, would be even more effective.

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<sup>1</sup> See the report on the Lisbon Treaty by the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, no. 188 of January 30, 2008 – Jean François-Poncet.

## II. THE STEPS TO TAKE

### A. *STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES*

In our view, three main principles must guide common Middle East policy.

#### **1. Give the Israeli-Palestinian conflict priority**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict poisons the situation in the Middle East, but let us not be fooled. All sides manipulate it for foreign and domestic policy purposes. Nobody really cares about it. The Palestinians and Israelis are the only ones who suffer.

Everybody knows what must be done to conclude peace but the partners to sign it are missing.

The Western powers must focus their efforts on settling the conflict and making a stronger commitment without deviating from this important objective for the Palestinian people's survival and the Israelis' security.

That would not end all the conflicts under way but it would ease tensions and anti-Western resentment. Our own security is at stake.

#### **2. Disconnect the treatment of conflicts from each other**

Foreign policy is used for domestic purposes in the Middle East more than in any other part of the world. That is true in Iran. That is true in Israel. And that is true in many other States in the region, such as Syria or Iraq.

Tzipi Livni's and Ehud Barak's electoral concerns played a big part in the offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Iran's dictatorship stops at nothing, including Soviet-style false confessions, to show that the post-election unrest was fomented outside the country, pointing an accusing finger at Great Britain and the United States. In Syria, the Assads take a hard anti-Israeli and anti-Western line to muzzle the people, who suffer from the dictatorship and a controlled economic transition whose main beneficiaries are the members of the clan in power.

Everything seems interconnected in this context. The political players do all they can to increase the impression of confusion. Israel's prime minister tries to link progress on the Palestinian issue with settling the Iranian question, in other words stopping its nuclear program. Meanwhile, Iran's leaders stir up fears of an Israeli attack to step up repression and portray themselves as the only ones in the Muslim world really standing up to the West.

**It is therefore imperative to disconnect conflicts from each other and to refuse, for example, to link advances on the Palestinian issue with the Iranian question.**

### **3. Target diplomatic actions**

Any Middle East foreign policy must avoid what Collège de France professor Henry Laurens calls "the perverse game of meddling and interference". Traditionally, the Middle East countries are inclined to request the intervention of an outside power capable of helping them solve domestic conflicts. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a diplomatic settlement between London and Paris ended fighting between Christians and Druzes in Lebanon's mountains. But when outside powers become involved, local powers denounce their interference.

Furthermore, any Western initiative towards a Middle East country risks altering relations with the other governments. Until recently, closer ties with Syria displeased Saudi Arabia. Egypt feels that if Saudi Arabia becomes the main partner in settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict its leadership would be challenged. There is no shortage of examples.

**It therefore seems desirable to limit diplomatic actions to what is strictly necessary, in other words to issues involving our security, our economy and the consolidation of bilateral relations with governments and civil society.**

**The conflict between Europe's and the Muslim countries' conception of human rights must be treated firmly but not condescendingly or aggressively. It is better to give persecuted human rights campaigners concrete assistance, grant them asylum and support the actions of the International Federation for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc. Words and especially deeds must strongly reaffirm equality between all human beings and respect for every individual's dignity.**

## ***B. ACTIONS TO CARRY OUT***

The rapporteurs identified four major problems requiring swift action: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iranian nuclear program, Yemen and Iraq.

### **1. Guarantee the Palestinians' future and the State of Israel's existence while consolidating peace with Syria and Lebanon**

The lack of negotiating partners complicates the present situation. The Palestinians are too divided and reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas

seems unlikely. The Israelis think they do not need peace because their army dissuades all their neighbors and guarantees their security. Moreover, the full proportional voting system strips their leaders of the political clout necessary to make the concessions required in effective negotiations. **The top priorities must be ensuring that the Palestinians have a single, legitimate representative capable of negotiating on their behalf and convincing the Israelis that a just and lasting peace is in their interests.**

**But that will not be enough. An honest broker is also necessary** because the parties will not reach an agreement as long as the balance of power is so blatantly skewed and the willingness is not there. The situation already degenerated after UN resolution 181 in 1948 because the Security Council failed to follow up on the partition plan's consequences. In the absence of UN intervention, the United States and the European Union have the political and financial clout to be that honest broker if they act in concert.

**Convincing Israel** to accept the creation of a Palestinian State mainly depends on the United States, but the American president's ability to confront pro-Israeli lobbies in Congress dwindles as his popularity falls. Europe must pick up the baton and help the United States find the ways and means for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Until now the US administration has made ending settlement activity an indicator of Israel's sincerity when it says it wants peace. The European countries, including France, have backed that view by demanding a total settlement freeze from Benjamin Netanyahu. Paradoxically, that puts the Israeli prime minister in position of strength. He can exert a form of blackmail on his government's political survival: if political pressure is too strong, he would lose his narrow majority and it would be necessary to wait many long months to have an Israeli interlocutor again.

One possible way out of the deadlock would be to draw a clear border between Israel and the Palestinians, which would push the settlement issue into the background and force the settlers to choose whether they want to stay or go. It would reduce opposition. Settlers in territories destined to no longer be under Israeli authority could have the choice of leaving in return for financial aid or staying, keeping their Israeli citizenship in the future Palestinian State. A multinational force guaranteeing security could be considered. American think tanks have worked a lot on this issue and many solutions are conceivable.

However, drawing a border depends on negotiation and, therefore, a negotiator capable of speaking on behalf of all Palestinians. That is why the radical proposal of a pure and simple return to the 1967 borders, which Henry Siegman and the US/Middle East project group put forward, has a major advantage: it does not require a Palestinian negotiator or the evacuation of Israeli settlers because they would stay put under Palestinian sovereignty. Some American pro-Israeli lobbies, such as Abraham Foxman's Anti-



Diffamation League, believe that proposal is worth considering. After all, why shouldn't the new Palestinian State include Jewish citizens?

Unfortunately, all the diplomats focus their attention on stopping the settlements. But a freeze would not create a Palestinian State. The US administration should pressure the Israeli government into lifting the Gaza blockade, which would enable the **European Union to play its role with the Palestinians.**

The formation of a Palestinian national unity government will not depend on reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. Egypt has done its utmost to achieve that goal but after the Gaza tragedy it was a mission impossible. In addition, Egypt has little influence over Hamas. Its failure not only deprives the Palestinians of representatives capable of negotiating, but also clouds the outlook for legislative and presidential elections in January 2010. Yet, failing reconciliation, the elections are indispensable for deciding between the two factions and naming negotiators.

That is where the European Union can put its **financial aid to the Palestinian territories, Fatah on the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, into the balance, making elections a precondition for funding.**

**That requires mandating a European Union special envoy to the Middle East to talk to Hamas.** In close connection with his or her US counterpart, George Mitchell, and of course the government of Israel, the special envoy could negotiate the **lifting of the Gaza blockade** in return for the **setting up of a transitional Palestinian Authority** in charge of organizing elections and choosing the voting method. **It could also show the European countries that the reform of Fatah and the PLO decided at the Bethlehem congress in August 2009 is under way. Turkey and Syria can and must be associated with this process.**

**Together the United States and Europe must demand signs of peace from both parties. Those signs might not only be a total settlement freeze but also the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel and of Israeli and Palestinian prisoners held by Fatah and Hamas; an exchange between Gilad Shalit and Marwan Barghouti; an end to the expulsions of Jerusalem's Palestinians; and the complete removal of roadblocks on the West Bank. A deadline should be considered: the Israeli government promised to freeze settlements and evacuate unauthorized settlers at Annapolis in 2007 and never followed through.**

**Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is all the more important because peace between Israel, Syria and Lebanon depends on it.** The rapporteurs have come to the conclusion that there is no point in Syria and Israel resuming direct negotiations on handing over the Golan Heights as long as a viable Palestinian State does not exist. Likewise, it is useless to hope that Lebanon will achieve lasting stability without settling the issue of Palestinian refugees.

## **2. Prevent the bomb and avoid bombing in Iran**

Since the elections, which were probably rigged, the regime has been drifting towards outright dictatorship. It has just shown its worst side: unstable, warmongering and paranoid. But since the end of the war with Iraq, Iran's policy has shifted away from exporting the Islamist Revolution and glossing over its Shiite identity to lead the Muslim and "disadvantaged" world. Iran has focused on its national interests and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is pursuing his forerunners' ultranationalist direction. His outrageous, populist outbursts are intended for his electorate. Iran needs to exaggerate the foreign threat in order to shift its people's attention away from its domestic problems.

No hardcore proof suggests Iran's nuclear program is military, but many clues point that way. The apparently civilian program probably includes a military option that the country's leaders have not chosen yet. If they do, Iran could have its first nuclear device by late 2010. But it would be a single, experimentally unvalidated device that could not be carried by a missile. Iran would not acquire a dissuasive nuclear force before 2015.

There are reasons to question whether a nuclear-armed Iran should be feared. Israel and the Western powers have atomic weapons. If a war breaks out, dissuasion would probably play as big a role as it did in the Cold War. Iran's leaders often unleash a barrage of anti-Western rhetoric but they have rational interests to defend. However, Ahmadinejad's reelection adds an additional factor of uncertainty.

**The real threat to world peace would be the inevitable nuclearization of the Middle East, following in the footsteps of Israel and Iran. That is why everything must be done to prevent Iran's nuclear program from becoming military, if it is not already.**

Iran probably believes that cultivating ambiguity puts it into a position of strength. If negotiations succeed, its leaders will have obtained economic and political advantages in return for giving up a virtual military program. If they fail and Iran is attacked, it will take on the victim role it likes so much to boost its popularity in the Muslim world.

One thing is sure: neither the West nor Israel will stop Iran's nuclear program by force. What has been built can be destroyed but what has been learned cannot be unlearned.

Can it be stopped by negotiation? There is reason to doubt it, considering the Europeans' long experience in the matter. There is a very simple reason for that: the present Iranian regime needs enemies to exist. Will détente follow?

Nevertheless, talks must be given one last chance and the US president's outstretched hand policy, which was not Europe's initial position, must be supported.

Germany, France and the United Kingdom, mandated by the entire Union, could start negotiating with Iran: they could offer Iran civilian nuclear cooperation and a dialogue on regional security in exchange for stopping uranium enrichment activities.

**If the talks fail stronger sanctions should be considered, hopefully in association with China and Russia. The abandonment of the US anti-missile shield project in Poland and the Czech Republic is certainly a step in that direction.**

**At the same time, it would be desirable to promote the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East, similar to those in Latin America, Africa and Oceania, in the framework of a regional treaty including Israel<sup>1</sup>. That is one of the most important aspects of a Middle East without nuclear weapons. Otherwise, the region's peoples will once again accuse of the West of a double standard.**

### **3. Save the Yemeni State from failure to keep it from becoming Al Qaeda's next base**

Little is heard about Yemen in the West, yet its strategic location at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East is crucial. The peninsula's Arab States invested a lot there before giving up. An electronic wall on the border with Saudi Arabia is under construction.

Yemen is not yet a failed State but on its way to becoming one. The collapse of its economy, particularity of its geography with its high mountains and steep, unclimbable valleys, and weakness of its government, whose authority stretches no further than Sana'a, might make the country a new base for bin Laden's followers. Groups with links to Al Qaeda are active there and many young Europeans are enrolled in madrasas in northern Yemen. Nothing would be gained from winning the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan if it had to be fought all over again in Yemen.

**Yemen must be saved from failure and anarchy, in its interest and in ours. An international conference on its future should take place as soon as possible.**

### **4. Help Iraq rebuild its State**

The improvement of security in Iraq remains shaky. The Iraqi State will suffer many setbacks before restoring the country's unity. The Kurds have not renounced Kirkuk, which is a sort of Jerusalem to them, but they do not

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<sup>1</sup> *Four regional treaties have established four nuclear-war-free zones: the 1967 Treaty of Tlateloco for Latin America and the Caribbean; 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga for the South Pacific; 1995 Treaty of Bangkok for Southeast Asia; and 1996 Treaty of Pelindaba for Africa.*

plan to secede, if only because of how Turkey would react. In addition, peaceful solutions, such as a *sui generis* status, can be implemented.

The restoration of economic life will take even longer. Infrastructure that has been destroyed or left to deteriorate for 30 years must be rebuilt. Iraq could provide the financing if corruption did not skim off oil profits. In addition, the Iraqis must agree on the redistribution of oil revenues and on a legal framework attractive enough to draw foreign companies.

Europe can and must help Iraq find solutions to the water problem with its neighbors Turkey and Iran. The European Union could launch a diplomatic initiative towards Turkey as soon as possible if the European Commission agrees to consider the issue.

**Free elections are not enough for Iraq's rebirth. It also needs an impartial State: civil servants, judges, administrators, managers, teachers, soldiers and police officers who put the country's interests above their own. Europe can help. France, which decided not to participate in the war, must increase its civil presence today.**

## CONCLUSION

The Middle East is complicated, but no more so than Europe. And, unlike Europe, it is undergoing fast demographic, cultural, economic and political change.

The Middle East has areas of fragility, including Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon. Questions remain about Al Qaeda, Egypt and Syria but positive trends are under way in Saudi Arabia and nearly everywhere in the Gulf. Little except good things is said about Jordan and Oman. Happy are peoples who have no history, Hegel said.

The French have a sometimes-approximate vision of the Middle East based on poorly known history and cut-and-dried judgments. We see these peoples and their culture as irremediably different from us, in particular because of religion, reducing them to that dimension too often, which masks a search for their identity. Religion has also forged identity and shaped history in Europe, leaving traces of blood and iron there. Are the tensions between Shiites and Sunnis so different from those that once existed between Catholic and Protestants?

The Middle East is as far from Europe as eastern Russia. Its history is much more connected to ours than that of Asia. Its future concerns us more directly than that of South America or Oceania. It would be a mistake to be uninterested in it.

If the West reveals itself incapable of ensuring a future for the Palestinian people, the East will remember, considering it Israel's protector. If the West reveals itself incapable of preventing Iran's nuclear program from leading to a military arsenal, the entire region will certainly go nuclear, which would not be a factor of stability.

The United States embodies the West in the Middle East's eyes. They are omnipresent but their image is murky. America was hated under George W. Bush but is attractive with Barack Obama. The new president has a big part of the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iran in his hands. But he will not manage to make peace alone. The Europeans can help him if they finally decide to let the Union play its part as a great power.

The two problems, Palestine and Iran, are not connected but feed off one another and serve as an excuse for procrastination. Europe has an interest in working together with the United States on finding a peaceful settlement in both cases.

It is also important to keep Yemen from falling into anarchy and to help Iraq in its difficult rebirth.

Hopefully, this report will help meet those diplomatic challenges.

## **Reports before the committee on trips to the Middle East**

**First trip – Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Qatar**  
from October 19 to 30, 2008

*(report of January 12, 2009)*

First, Monique Cerisier-ben Guiga recalled the various trips to the Arabian Peninsula, which successively brought the delegation to Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. She said the mission had been preceded by 19 hearings of diplomats, researchers and intelligence officials. The delegation complemented the 46 interviews with readings that shed light on the issues, in particular the political balance in Saudi Arabia and how the Saud family imposed its legitimacy on the tribes. She wanted to contribute sociological, geographical and historical details to round out remarks by Jean François-Poncet.

When Didier Boulaud asked her about Usama bin Laden's origins, she said he was from a wealthy, prominent Yemeni business family, allied with families in the Hedjaz area, with roots in the Hadramaout region bordering Saudi Arabia.

She said that although the Arabian Peninsula is rife with regional idiosyncrasies and mistrust, it is viewed as a whole. Two countries are highly populated: Saudi Arabia, which is very rich, and Yemen, which is very poor. The population in the other States is mainly foreign. There are just 800,000 native-born Dubaians in Dubai; the majority of the rest of the population is made up of Indians, Vietnamese and Nepalese, which poses a real problem of identity and national existence.

The region's other big challenge is lack of water. In Yemen, not even the main cities have fresh supplies of clean drinking water. Dubai has no water purification plants, which leads to some rather frightful situations.

Yemen has the fastest-growing population, which is one reason the Saudis are considering building a wall along the border.

Chairman de Rohan said Yemen looks like a perfect prey for Islamists.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said Yemen, a recently unified State where the government is at the end of its rope, could turn into another Afghanistan. The president keeps the country under control with a "checkbox" policy. Refugees pouring in from neighboring Eritrea and Somalia are an additional source of destabilization.

Mr. François-Poncet said one of the mission's main goals was to publish a report on the Middle East situation, which would be followed by a symposium. The report must focus on the region's main problems and prospects, keeping what European policy should be and France's position and interests in mind. He said

that in addition to four trips to the region, a mission was planned for the United States, whose policy is one of the unknowns for the Middle East's future.

Mentioning the many hearings the rapporteurs held, he said he was struck by the competence of the people working on the issues in France. He added that travel to the Arabian Peninsula met two needs: getting an idea of what its problems are and finding out how its leaders see the Middle East.

He said that although many of the analysts heard described Saudi Arabia's situation as pre-revolutionary, that was not the delegation's feeling. After the period of great uncertainty following the events of 2003, Saudi Arabia has remained the region's pillar and most populous State, whose regional and global role, in particular as the world's leading oil producer, is still considerable. King Abdallah, who as crown prince exercised the reality of power for a long time, is a firm, cautious man and a determined reformer. In 2006 he had a succession law passed setting up an allegiance council that includes King Abdelaziz Ibn Saud's children or their descendents. Its 35 members are in charge of naming the king's successor. It is assisted by a medical committee, which can declare whether or not the king is incapacitated. It is a stabilizing body, which is necessary because the generational transition to King Abdelaziz's grandchildren is a potential source of destabilization.

Effective, intelligent police work and political reinsertion of people involved in terrorist attacks, a program financed by rising oil prices, have restored domestic security.

Saudi Arabia, which has huge financial resources—\$550 billion in reserves—is pursuing a smarter economic development policy, including diversifying and building infrastructure, than it did during the first two oil crises.

Nevertheless, it has some weak points.

The country has seven million foreign workers, a Shiite minority in the oil-producing areas and an Ismailian minority on the border with Yemen.

The middle classes consider themselves ignored compared to the clerics and youth unemployment is high. But society, in particular the situation of women, who play a growing part in companies and government offices, is changing.

Saudi Arabia's oil, financial wealth and role as the guardian of holy places give it considerable regional and global power. Its international positions are taken very seriously. King Abdallah's peace plan proposed Israel's return to its 1967 borders in exchange for the normalization of relations with all the Arab States. At President Karzai's request, Saudi Arabia has started acting as a mediator with the Taliban.

Mr. François-Poncet said small indigenous populations are one of the Gulf States' most significant features. Qatar is the world's leading natural gas producer and has proportionate financial resources. The country's political and security role has less to do with its own military means than with the presence of US forces in the region and its diplomacy, which contributes to negotiations on regional crises. France has stepped up its role in the Emirates, where Abu Dhabi

is its main ally. In 1996 France and Abu Dhabi signed a defense accord leading to the opening of a French military base.

Mr. François-Poncet said Saudi Arabia views Yemen as a failed State, which is not yet the case. Whole regions lie outside the central government's control. Government forces have failed to put down the Houti rebellion in the Zaydite north. The south, which was autonomous for a very long time, has virtually seceded. The rest of the country is made up of high valleys populated by very autonomous tribes. Hostage-taking and attacks have occurred. The US embassy came under assault in March 2008. Bin Laden's general staff and some Yemeni groups seem to be communicating on a regular basis, but there is no sign of relations with Iran.

Yemen, which has a very high birth rate, is the Achilles heel of regional security. It needs our attention. Saudi Arabia is weary of financing the country, where corruption is rampant, and has decided to build an electronic border fence.

President Saleh has been voted into office twice by universal suffrage in free and fair elections but his authority barely stretches beyond the capital, which does not give a very reassuring image of Yemen.

Mr. François-Poncet said that although the Arabian Peninsula's States stress the Palestinian question, the issue they care about most is the nuclearization of Iran. Saudi Arabia is closely following the events in Lebanon with the feeling that Iran will not give up its influence and drag out the negotiations. Questioned on what to do, officials said they oppose strikes on Iran, whereas think tanks believe that Iran is in no way inclined to give up its military nuclear program.

All of them think Iraq will not break up and are extremely critical of President Bush. None considers the withdrawal of US troops a serious possibility.

**Second trip – Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine,**  
January 18 to 31, 2009.

*(report of February 3, 2009)*

First, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga mentioned the delegation's visit to Syria, which is made up of several communities, including a Sunni majority and Christian, Alawite, Druse and Kurd minorities. The government manages to keep the country together with an iron fist while at the same time seeking a certain degree of economic openness.

Hard-line opposition to Israel helps the Syrian regime ensure its cohesiveness and win support from public opinion, but its diplomacy actually tries to keep several balls in the air: the Golan Heights, Lebanon, support for Hezbollah and Hamas, and relations with Turkey and France, with which it has a complex history of attraction and hard feelings crystallizing around the Lebanese question.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga reported on the interview with Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal in Damascus, specifying that the initiative came from the



mission's members and was organized without any help from the French embassy. Hamas has become a key player in the region and, however one might feel about the organization, hearing what its main leader has to say seemed to make sense.

In a long interview, Mr. Meshaal presented himself as a political leader to be reckoned with. At no time was his discourse religious or ideological.

With regard to Israel's recent military intervention in Gaza, he said the Gaza Strip's inhabitants reaped no benefits from the truce Hamas had managed to impose on its troops from August to December 2008 because Israel did not lift the blockade in exchange. In that context, he said, Hamas had no choice but to break the truce.

He said the scale and brutality of Israel's reaction took Hamas by surprise. The UN put the Palestinian death toll at 1,300, half of them women and children.

Mr. Meshaal said Hamas, which only lost around 50 fighters during the Israeli offensive, actually emerged stronger from the operation. It not only still controls the Gaza and can launch rockets into Israel, but also put up resistance he called "legendary". Hamas has gained genuine legitimacy on three occasions: the first time by becoming a national Palestinian movement, the second by winning elections and the third by resisting Israel's offensive. Mr. Meshaal said Hamas must therefore be recognized as an interlocutor and a key player in the Palestinian arena, especially since Fatah and PLO have lost the Palestinian people's respect by collaborating with Israel during the conflict.

He said the Hamas Charter, which contains many anti-Semitic references, could be abandoned when Israel recognizes the Palestinian State in its 1967 borders. Until now, he said, neither Yasser Arafat nor Abu Mazen have obtained anything in exchange for recognizing the State of Israel.

Mr. Meshaal said Hamas wants recognition of the Palestinian people's national rights and that Europe can have a part to play since the United States has failed in its role as mediator.

Then Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga discussed the situation in Lebanon, where all the political parties are focusing on next June's elections.

Lebanon has three separate communities. It is one-third Sunni, led by Rafik Hariri's son, Saad; one-third Shiite, with the Amal militia, which hardly matters anymore, and Hezbollah, led by Nassan Nazrallah; and one-third Christian divided into two camps: the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geaga and his ally Michel Murr, who are allied with the Sunnis, and General Aoun, who, with the other half of the Christians, is allied with Hezbollah and Syria. Walid Jumblatt's Druzes protect their interests the best they can.

In these conditions, it looks as though the Christians will determine the next elections' results by joining one or the other of the dominant communities, enabling the formation of a coalition government.

The fact that Hezbollah stayed on the sidelines during Israel's Gaza offensive shows that it may not be Iran's or Syria's "puppet", as some people think, but that Lebanese politics is its top priority.

UNIFIL has managed to enforce a certain degree of order in southern Lebanon despite the Israeli air force's daily violations of Lebanese airspace.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said no Israeli official except Haim Oron, leader of Meretz, the Zionist left party, agreed to see the mission's members because they had met Mr. Meshaal. However, the mission did meet some interesting figures, including Avi Primor, Israel's former ambassador in Germany, and representatives of think tanks.

The mission came away from its visit to Israel with the overall impression that the country has never seemed safer, except in the center-west where people are traumatized by Hamas rockets, which strike and kill at random. In those conditions, the remaining insecurity seems all the more intolerable.

Israelis are frustrated and have the feeling that they were paid back for handing over Gaza with rocket strikes on southern Israel, killing 25 people in eight years, and that Hamas deserved a "good lesson". The delegation met Franco-Israelis in Ashkelon, who were directly targeted by the rockets and movingly told us about the difficulties of their daily lives.

According to polls, it looks as though Benjamin Netanyahu will lead the right to power in the next legislative elections and form a coalition with Ehud Barak's Labor Party, the far-right leader Avigdor Lieberman and the ultra-orthodox Shaas Party. The center-right Kadima Party and Tzipi Livni will probably be the elections' losers.

The Israeli army's Gaza intervention seems to have further widened the gap between the economically and socially marginalized Israeli Arabs and the rest of the population.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga then talked about the trip to the Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza.

First the mission went to the Palestinian Authority's headquarters in Ramallah, on the West Bank, where it held several interviews, in particular with Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad.

Then the mission went to the Gaza Strip, where it observed the destruction Israel's military intervention caused. The events in Gaza cannot, strictly speaking, be called a "war" because there were no armed clashes with Hamas fighters, who avoid combat, but the offensive began with massive, targeted air raids followed by an invasion of tanks.

Gaza is not Dresden and most of the city's buildings are still standing. The Israeli strikes were extremely targeted so it is hard to assess the "collateral damage". But the Israeli army seems to have deliberately targeted the American school, Palestinian Red Crescent hospital, UNWRA warehouse, which contained seven million euros worth of food and medicine, industrial zone (324 factories) and mosques.

The delegation can attest that the Israelis used phosphorus bombs in at least two cases, on the Red Cross hospital and the United Nations warehouse. Several non-governmental organizations have confirmed that Israeli soldiers massacred the Samouni family in Zeitoun.

The UN puts the death toll of operation "cast lead" at approximately 1,300 on the Palestinian side, half of them women and children, and three civilians and 10 soldiers on the Israeli side.

Israel seems politically too weak and militarily too strong to make peace.

Its political weakness comes from parliamentary system based on a unicameral legislative branch whose members are elected by full proportional representation, which means that the prime minister is constantly subject to blackmail by the small parties in his coalition upon which the government's survival depends, like the Fourth Republic in France during the Algerian War.

Israel's military might also discourages a political solution. The universally recognized effectiveness of Mossad and Israeli intelligence, and the superiority of the Israeli air force, which is bigger than its French counterpart, make the country invincible in a conventional war. Ben Gurion set up that strategy because of Israel's small size and the large populations of the countries surrounding it. Israel can and must never be taken by surprise.

The Palestinians are too isolated and divided to make peace. In Arab opinion, the Palestinian Authority looks like Israel's "collaborators" and Hamas like "resisters". That situation may considerably undermine the moderate Arab States, especially if they are facing succession problems at the top, which is the case in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Before the Gaza conflict, some people thought the Iranian question was the most important Middle East issue but events have shown that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is central. Israel's Gaza offensive has further complicated the peace process. Everybody agrees on the idea of two States within the 1967 borders, but the dismantling of Israeli settlements on the West Bank would probably cause a veritable civil war. Yet hope springs eternal. Israel's release of Marwan Barghouti could foster inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

Barack Obama's desire to become involved in the peace process, which he demonstrated the day after his inauguration by appointing a special envoy, Senator George J. Mitchell, is a good sign.

Europe can have significant influence if it remains united and speaks with a single voice.

Mr. François-Poncet made the following observations:

- It will be hard to drive a wedge between Syria and Iran because their opposition to Saddam Hussein in the past and to the Kurds and Israel in the present has forged strong ties between them.

Iran and Syria are likely to continue backing Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah unless Israel gives back the Golan Heights. Then Syria could consider loosening its ties Iran. For the moment the alliance between the two countries is strong.

- The interview with Khaled Meshaal left the feeling that Hamas is willing to negotiate with Israel in conditions close to those of the other Arab parties.

- In Lebanon, the Christians' division paradoxically contributes to their electoral strength because they will determine the next elections' outcome. The Shiites on one side and the Sunnis on the other probably have the highest number of potential votes as they can obtain in their respective constituencies and the Christians will tip the scales one way or the other.

- The delegation has the feeling that Israel is at a dead end. It rejects a viable Palestinian State within the 1967 borders as well as the alternative solution of a multiconfessional State integrating the Arab population. That raises questions about its medium and long-term strategy. In the absence of a clear strategy, Israel's rejection forces the country to pursue its current policy, which is heading straight into a wall.

- The development of the political situation in Israel, with the orthodox clerics' rising power, including in the army and its upper ranks, and the voters' swing to the right, if not the far right, is hardly reassuring. The Israeli Arabs' marginalization may create serious internal tensions that sooner or later will lead to a bold affirmative action policy.

- Israel's Gaza offensive was relatively successful militarily but, like the 2006 intervention in Lebanon, a political failure. Hamas emerged from the trial stronger. The real political loser is the Palestinian Authority: Israel has no veritable interlocutor to make peace. The release of Marwan Barghouti would help overcome that hurdle by encouraging inter-Palestinian reconciliation and helping to revive the peace process.

- The new US president's expressed willingness to become involved issue and his appointment of a special representative who knows the region well are positive signs that will force the United States to make headway in the peace process.

- The dismantling of Israel's West Bank settlements and the question of Jerusalem will be the peace process's main stumbling blocks.

- Iran, which has more influence on Hezbollah and Hamas than Syria, has become a key player in the region.

Specifying that she was speaking in a personal capacity, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said she was extremely shocked by the Israeli army's brutality in Gaza, which looked like a collective punishment inflicted on a people and challenged the international community.

She said Europe has a special responsibility to investigate those acts and, if need be, condemn them, and that it must use all its influence to help the parties reach a lasting peace in the region.

Chairman de Rohan thanked Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga and Mr. François-Poncet for their report before recalling that the president of the Republic and the government conduct France's foreign policy but parliament is free to make all the contacts it deems necessary to inform itself as completely as possible before

everyone can make their own political conclusions in the respect of the principle of responsibility.

Nathalie Goulet voiced regret over the French government's passivity during Israel's military intervention in Gaza. Mr. de Rohan disputed that analysis, recalling that France had been very involved, with President Sarkozy and the foreign affairs minister making several trips to the region that led to a United Nations Security Council resolution and a peace plan jointly drafted with Egypt.

When Ms. Goulet asked what the mission's next step would be, Mr. de Rohan said it would write a report and organize a symposium on the situation in the Middle East.

Mr. de Rohan also recalled the debate on the issue in the National Assembly and Senate.

When Jean-Pierre Chevènement asked if the publication of a report would be timely, Mr. François-Poncet answered that a third trip to Egypt, Iraq and Iran was being considered, as well as a visit to the United States in order to meet representatives of the new administration, and that only afterwards would an overall report be written with the ambitious goal of summarizing the Middle East's present trends and prospects.

Robert del Picchia said that, considering Israel's electoral system, the victory of the right and of Benjamin Netanyahu was not a foregone conclusion. He added that he had recently met the assistant director-general of UNWRA, the United Nations agency in the Palestinian territories, who told him, with regard to the Israeli army's bombardment of the agency's premises in Gaza, that Hamas had never used the building's underground levels. Then he asked about the Israeli intervention's effects on the tunnels between Gaza and Egypt.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga replied that the tunnels between Gaza and Egypt would remain as long as Israel did not lift the Gaza blockade because they are the only way for the Gaza Strip's Palestinian population to obtain food, goods and medicine.

She also mentioned Israeli polls, which indicate that the right is gaining ground, although the full proportional voting system is a factor of uncertainty.

Quoting several representatives of Israeli think tanks, according to whom the military intervention in Gaza was just an "experiment", she said that when terrorism hit France, in particular when the Drakkar building was destroyed in Beirut, it did not raze the Shiite villages in Bekaa and that the United Kingdom never bombed Dublin or Belfast to retaliate against Irish terrorism. She said that inflicting collective punishment on the Palestinian people was unacceptable.

Mr. François-Poncet said that if the Gaza conflict was an "experiment" that was mainly because it drew conclusions and learned lessons from Israel's asymmetrical war in Lebanon in 2006.

René Beaumont said he had recently gone to Lebanon with the Senate's France-Lebanon friendship group and left with the sense that Hezbollah has become a player to be reckoned in Lebanese politics. He wondered whether the divided Christian parties might determine the future elections' outcome.

Robert Badinter pointed out that elections were or would soon be taking place in most of the region's countries, with the notable exception of Syria. In addition, the power vacuum in the United States during the period of transition between the two administrations made that period the only one possible for an armed intervention in Gaza.

He said the State of Israel has felt that its very existence has been threatened since it was created in 1948, and that in foreign policy that anxiety translates into making the recognition of Israel's right to exist its policy's priority and ultimate aim in the region. Although Mr. Badinter has condemned Israeli policy, in particular settlements, on several occasions in the past, he said that Israel's anxiety must be taken into account.

Mr. Badinter also recalled that Hamas is on the European Union's list of terrorist groups and that it has always refused to recognize Israel's right to exist. Hamas is continuously perfecting its rockets' precision and increasing their range, which means they may soon be able to hit Tel Aviv. He wondered what the Palestinians' national rights meant and whether that involved the movement's recognition of the State of Israel.

Mr. Badinter wondered whether Iran's influence on Hezbollah and Hamas is decisive, making it a key player in the region. Recalling that Iran's present leaders regularly call for Israel's destruction, he said there was a risk that Israel might try to face that threat of annihilation alone.

Mr. François-Poncet replied that during his interview with Khaled Meshaal in Damascus, the Hamas leader said there was not much difference between his movement's and Fatah's or the PLO's claims concerning Palestinian national rights: all of them demand a viable Palestinian State within the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return for refugees. He had the feeling that Hamas was disposed to enter negotiations as soon as it was recognized as an interlocutor.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said that although Hamas does not officially recognize Israel's existence it demands the creation of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, which implies *de facto* recognition.

Mr. François-Poncet said that although most Israelis want peace and are ready to accept the idea of two States, the domestic political situation does not encourage optimism. Nor do Israeli West Bank settlements, which are so big that it is very hard to imagine dismantling them. A valid question is what the army's attitude would be if the Israeli government decided to do that.

Mr. François-Poncet said Hamas would implicitly recognize Israel as soon as it entered negotiations. The best way for Israel to guarantee its security and make peace would be to accept the existence of a Palestinian State.

About Iran, Mr. François-Poncet said the key question was knowing whether the United States, Europe, the Arab countries and Israel could accept the idea of its acquiring the atomic bomb. He added that Europe and the United States might eventually come to terms with that situation, but would Israel, considering the statements Iran's leaders have made? The nuclear issue will be central in the coming negotiations between the United States and Iran. The US

administration will probably run out of patience with the stalling tactics of an Iran that is drawing closer to its nuclear objective day by day. An attempt to destroy Iran's nuclear sites cannot be totally ruled out if the talks fail.

Mr. Badinter said it is hard to know what Iran really wants.

Chairman de Rohan asked about the new US administration's policy in the region and the possibility for the European Union to become more involved. He added that Iran's goal is to be fully recognized as a great power.

Mr. François-Poncet replied that the earliest steps President Obama took show a genuine desire to become more involved in the region and that Europe could provide useful assistance if it is united and speaks with a single voice.

### **Third trip – Egypt, February 22 to 27, 2009**

*(report of March 11, 2009)*

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said she is alarmed at the political situation in Egypt. The regime controls the domestic situation with an iron fist but the government's conciliatory diplomatic line towards Israel during the Gaza War strengthened its unpopularity just when the economic situation was deteriorating and the internal political situation is more frozen than ever.

Egypt looks like a blocked society. Despite tensions, which translate into a strong return of religion and higher risk of terrorism, the regime still has firm control of civil society as President Mubarak's succession draws near.

The economic outlook is bleak. Egypt has a population of 80 million, including 600,000 young people entering the labor market every year. Finance minister Youssef Boutros Ghali told the rapporteurs that 16% of the population live below the poverty line but the UNDP says that 58% live on less than two dollars a day.

The situation is bound to deteriorate owing to the global economic crisis. The finance minister said Egypt's three main sources of foreign revenue were expected to fall considerably in 2009:

- tourism receipts, at \$11 billion a year the main source of revenue, would drop by 40%;
- oil and gas exports would also decrease by 40%;
- Suez Canal revenues are expected to go down by 25%.

Egypt's economic growth rate is expected to fall from 7% in 2008 to 4 or even 2% in 2009, whereas a minimum of 5% is necessary for newcomers to find jobs on the labor market. Despite a crackdown, social unrest, including strikes and demonstrations by professional groups, has already occurred and the finance minister expects it to increase.

In this context, the prospects for political change seem non-existent.

The Muslim Brotherhood is not unanimously popular and says it is not ready to take power. The mission met its parliamentary group's leader, who gave the impression that his organization is a "reasonable" opposition party comparable in many ways to the Christian Democratic parties in France and Europe. It would rather win votes with an active social program than win the elections, for fear of eliciting a reaction from the army and the international community.

Between the National Democratic Party in power and the Muslim Brotherhood, the centrist parties are fragmented. Some, like Al-Wasat, are banned. Charismatic centrist leaders, such as Ayman Nour, head of the Al-Ghad Party, are in jail. On December 24, 2005 Mr. Nour was sentenced to five years for fraud in the procedure to recognize his new liberal party created in October 2004. Everybody knows he was imprisoned for being President Mubarak's main rival in the September 2005 presidential elections, when he won 7.3% of the votes, which is high in a country with low voter turnout (around 10% ). His recent release is probably the result of strong US pressure on the eve of Hillary Clinton's visit to Sharm el-Sheikh.

Egypt's foreign policy meets with incomprehension and silent opposition from Egyptians. They sympathized with the Palestinians' hardships during the Gaza events and considered the Mubarak government's management of the crisis as being too conciliatory towards Israel. The president's meeting with Tzipi Livni two days before the bombing began rightly or wrongly made people feel as though he "was in on it". The Egyptian authorities limited demonstrations and banned big rallies. The government did not let aid contributed by the Egyptian people (food, medicine, etc.) into Gaza until it was too late. It also apparently blocked the Rafah checkpoint, which people who are unaware of Israel's decisive role in controlling that point of passage in the framework of the 2005 accords did not understand.

The West's opposition to Iran's nuclear military program has aroused the Egyptians' sympathy for the Islamic Republic. To them Iran is a distant and not necessarily friendly country, but the fact that it stands up to the West alone, and the perception that the West has a double standard (it is acceptable for Israel to have nuclear weapons but not Iran), fuels a strong sense of "injustice" in every part of the population.

The combination of these three tensions translates into a general uneasiness in the population. The people the mission met, in particular artists and intellectuals, spoke of a feeling of "shame" and powerlessness because police repression prevented them from demonstrating their solidarity with the Gazans. The Egyptian people, who are very resentful towards the government, feel that their national pride has been hurt. It is a simmering revolt.

It is not surprising that those conditions have led to a hardening of identity, which takes the form of stronger religious beliefs, and an increased risk of terrorist attacks.

The word "Islamization" is often used to describe this phenomenon but overlooks the fact that Egyptian society has always been deeply Muslim. It would be more accurate to speak of a return of religion, which must be understood as an



assertion of identity and a way to distance society from the West. It would be more accurate to use the terms “de-Westernization” or “rejection of the West”, understood to encompass Israel, the United States and Europe. For example, people perceive wearing an Islamic beard, which Westerners associate with extremism, as a sign of honesty and morality. They reject the West’s values and Middle East policy but not its technology. It is common to see highly skilled professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and computer scientists wearing outward signs of their Muslim faith. The Muslim Brotherhood even recruits most of its members and leaders in those circles.

The hardening of identity creates serious tensions in society. Clashes between Egyptian Christians and Muslims have been particularly violent in the past few years. Those confrontations are reflected by deliberate displays of membership in a religious community, in particular on vehicles, which the government prohibits.

The resurgence of religion has also cast discredit on the Western-style women's emancipation movement, which the urban bourgeoisie supported in the 1920s. But women work, study and are highly visible in public places. They are veiled, sometimes quite stylishly. The veil lets young women from the most conservative, patriarchal backgrounds leave the family to study and work.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said that, according to the information she received in Egypt, a small group of improvised terrorists committed the February 22 attack in Cairo. The bomb was homemade, the explosive weak. Nobody claimed responsibility for the blast.

Egypt had already experienced a similar attack in 2005. They are carried out by small groups expressing widespread anger with violence. They do not seem to be part of an overall strategy to destabilize the regime, as was the case in the 1980s.

It seems likely that France was targeted because of the proclaimed friendship between Presidents Mubarak and Sarkozy and the deployment of the frigate *Germinal* off the coast of Gaza to end smuggling, but that cannot be proved, at least for now.

The question is whether Mr. Mubarak's regime has come out of the attacks weakened. The answer is no. Most people are appalled by the attacks, which shocks public opinion and damages tourism, the main source of revenue for a million Egyptian workers. Although this may sound like a stereotype, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said Egyptians are kind and peaceful. The country has had few revolutions in two centuries. Those that did take place only lasted a few days (1919, 1952). However, daily hardship could lead to more social and political violence. Police repression does not explain everything. Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga preferred talking about the Egyptian people's resilience and ability to withstand unbearable living conditions with humor as their only outlet.

Egyptian society is tightly controlled. The security services are everywhere and keeping people in line is easy because the standard of living is so low: anything can be bought, especially information. The army and intelligence services work closely with the National Democratic Party (NDP) in power.

The Muslim Brotherhood is split into two main currents:

- the "conservatives", who can actually be called "radicals", advocate merging the religious and political authorities;
- the "progressives" or "liberals" espouse a strict separation between the religious and political authorities.

By systematically jailing the progressive wing's leaders the Mubarak government's strategy is to let the most hardline members of the Muslim Brotherhood monopolize the Islamic opposition, strengthening their role as scarecrows.

Moreover, by imprisoning charismatic centrist leaders Mr. Mubarak's government manages to create a political situation where the only choice is between him and "chaos".

The way has been cleared for the Egyptian president's son, Gamal Mubarak, a highly Westernized, enterprising businessman, to have real power in the NDP. Nevertheless, his candidacy has come up against many stumbling blocks, starting with the fact that many Egyptians, in particular army officers, do not accept that Mubarak has handpicked his son to be his political heir, viewing this imitation of the Syrian model as an example of the decay of the republican spirit. The fact that Gamal Mubarak is not from the ranks of the military also weakens his chances. Lastly, some of the president's unpopularity rubs off on him.

It is certain that whomever is chosen, he will have to prove himself capable of maintaining stability. If constitutional procedures are followed, only a small number of people in the NDP are eligible to become president and a limited group of people will make the choice, which will not conflict with the army's orientations.

But the question of knowing who will be chosen actually matters little. The main thing is that the new president offer strong guarantees that he will be able to maintain order and the army's political and economic supremacy. Based on these assumptions, it seems that everything will depend on when the succession issue is settled. If it is during Mubarak's lifetime, his son Gamal has a good chance of becoming president. If not, the army will impose its man.

Since 1952 the army has been the only institution whose legitimacy is unquestioned in Egypt. It is a leading political and economic power, the country's biggest property owner, with military and civilian manufacturing sites, tourism investment programs and retired generals in parliament. The army controls diplomacy, which is not in the hands of a diplomat but of a military officer. The same is true of the economy. The army is a parallel society that supplies all its officers with housing, health care and holiday villages. It will undoubtedly resist any attempts to loosen its ties to power.

In those conditions, the likeliest hypothesis is that General Omar Souleiman, the minister of internal security, will become president. That is also the opinion of the Muslim Brotherhood leader the rapporteurs met.

In conclusion, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said Egyptian society is like a pressure cooker. Freedom of expression, limited to a fringe of the population, acts as a safety valve, so an explosion will probably not occur. If destabilization takes place it will probably come from an external shock or a major regional crisis. The Arab world still looks up to Egypt because of its high population, excellent scientific, artistic, intellectual and medical elites and skilled diplomats, but its dependency on the United States and desire for peace with Israel weaken the country's position in the Middle East. Egypt's diplomatic influence is limited to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which it wants to keep under its control.

To be effective, France's Middle East diplomacy must consider the multiplicity of power poles: Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The cold war within the Arab League must prompt us to be cautious in our alliances and public positions to avoid becoming alienated from some countries when we grow closer to others.

Then Mr. François-Poncet made three remarks. First, he said the economic crisis will or might shake Egypt to its very foundations. Although the country's economy is not very globalized, it has made much progress. A severe slowdown should be expected whose impact on society is unknown.

Second, Mr. François-Poncet said that he did not return with clear ideas on Mr. Mubarak's succession, which everybody in Cairo is talking about. The president's son is certainly campaigning. He is well educated and gives the impression of being modern but does not belong to the army, whose feelings towards him are not very clear. The Muslim Brotherhood says the next president will be General Omar Souleiman, the security minister, but he is 73 years old, although no other leader has his stature. His presidency could be an interim stage between Hosni and Gamal Mubarak.

Third, he said that, despite the criticism it draws, Egypt plays a very important part in the inter-Palestinian dialogue, whose meetings take place in Cairo.

In conclusion, Mr. François-Poncet said Egypt is an important country with two swords of Damocles over its head: the economic crisis and Mr. Mubarak's succession.

#### **Fourth trip – Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait**

March 28 to April 6, 2009 and **fifth trip – Kurdistan, Turkey**, May 6 to 12, 2009  
*(report of May 13, 2009)*

Mr. François-Poncet, rapporteur, recalled that he and his colleague, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga, went to Baghdad and returned by way of northern Iraq, or "Kurdistan", and Turkey. They were about to leave for the United States and would finish their mission with a trip to Brussels in June.

Mr. François-Poncet said he believes three issues dominate the situation in the Middle East: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran's military nuclear program and Iraq's future.

Iraq's future looked bleak until 2007. Since then, the tide has turned and one might wonder if the United States' "historic blunder" of invading Iraq will end up a success. Three questions remain: is the pacification real? Will it survive the pullout of US forces? How will the new Iraq fit into its new regional and international environment?

Everybody wonders whether security is a myth or a reality. Mr. François-Poncet clearly contributed a positive response in three areas: security, democratization and national unity.

First, he said the security situation has noticeably improved. That assertion is based on converging, overlapping information from the French embassy in Baghdad, Iraqi officials and US General Raymond T. Odierno. Fourteen out of 18 provinces are secure. Four are not yet but on their way to becoming so, including Mosul and Diyala, on the border with Iran. The death toll has dropped from 100 a day in 2008 to just ten today.

Second, Al Qaeda seems to have been defeated. Sleeper cells here and there do still have an offensive capacity but overall, the interlocutors said that Al Qaeda has lost in Iraq. When you take the road from Baghdad Airport to the Rasheed Hotel, which was terribly dangerous and which US forces had a great deal of difficulty securing, one drives through a besieged city without besiegers. The entire urban structure—walls, speed bumps and checkpoints—attests to the fighting. Members of the Groupement d'intervention de la gendarmerie nationale (GIGN, a special gendarmerie task force) guard the embassy round the clock and the ambassador can only travel in a convoy. The mission spent the night in Baghdad under the watchful eyes of the GIGN; Mr. François-Poncet emphasized their tremendous courage, courtesy and professionalism. He said the mission never felt threatened or heard gunfire or an explosion.

The main explanation for this situation is the surge. The US increased their forces in Iraq from 110,000 to 150,000, which enabled them to occupy the ground and prevent the insurgents from taking places back after an intervention. The second factor is that Sunni tribes rallied to the United States in return for payment: 90,000 Sunni fighters paid \$300 a day joined the "awakening councils" or *sahwas*. They probably turned against Al Qaeda because of its atrocities and blind attacks, which became unbearable. The awakening councils played a major part in eliminating Al Qaeda and pacifying Iraq.

Democratic stabilization is the second bright trend. Iraq, which has a unicameral parliamentary system, has held five genuine elections since 2005. Legislative elections are set to take place in December. The assembly is a lively forum where debates have replaced street clashes. That has resulted in particular from the split of Shiite movements into the al-Hakim's Islamic Supreme Council, Prime Minister al-Maliki's Da'wa Party and the Sadrist movement, which had its own militia, well known as the "Mahdi army". The scission resulted in parliamentary combinations between Shiites and Sunnis that have considerably opened up politics beyond ethnic or community divisions.

National stabilization is the third positive development. One of the main questions was whether the country will split into three parts: Kurdistan in the north, a Shiite State in the south and a Sunni State in the middle. Today it is possible to answer "no" to that question. That is due to one man, Prime Minister al-Maliki, whom the mission could not meet in Baghdad because he was attending the Doha Summit.

Mr. Maliki has gradually come into his own as a statesman. Two interventions against his fellow Shiites gave him that stature: the first was in Basra, in the south, when he put down a separatist uprising; the second was in a crowded Baghdad suburb, Sadr City, where he crushed the militant Mahdi Army. Those interventions by a Shiite leader against Shiites gave him a sort of national consecration, although the stature he has acquired, combined with his taste for power, has made him many enemies. He has defended Iraq's interests and contributed to the awakening of a national consciousness. Overall, a positive assessment of his action can be made.

The main question is what will happen after the Americans leave. One hundred and fifty thousand troops pulled out of the cities in late June 2009 and are set to leave the country completely by the end of November 2011. No bases will remain in Iraq. The mission met Great Britain's ambassador, who confirmed the plan but did not rule out the hypothesis that it might be modified at the request of the Iraqi government, which could ask the US forces to stay longer when the time comes.

Uncertainties remain involving political, security, economic and development issues as well as the Kurdish problem.

The main uncertainty is the political situation. Prime Minister al-Maliki has established his control, but his success and authoritarianism have met with strong opposition. The mission discerned a movement that could be called "anything but al-Maliki". General elections are set to take place in December 2009. Mr. al-Maliki will have to find a majority to back him up just when he may have to face a united front of his enemies: the Kurds, the Sunnis and the other Shiite factions.

The second uncertainty involves the 600,000-man armed and security forces, including the army, national police and local police. They have always operated with backup from US soldiers. Will they be capable of keeping order after the troops who trained and supported them leave? General Odierno says 75% of the Iraqi forces are considered reliable, 20% uncertain and 5% unreliable. The Sunni awakening councils are now bound to the Shiite majority government. Will that situation last? It would be disastrous if it does not. Some recent attacks have revealed dangerous fault lines.

The third uncertainty is the Kurds' attitude, which is probably the most serious problem. The Kurds are concentrated in the mountainous north. They played a considerable part in establishing the regime. Massoud Barzani, a charismatic leader, is the uncontested president of the Kurdish Regional Government, whereas Jalal Talabani, founder of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, is president of the Republic of Iraq. Kurdistan currently covers three regions and has sizeable oil resources. Since 1991 it has had a 300,000-man army (the

Peshmergas), which does not have heavy arms but is remarkably successful at keeping the region safe. The peshmergas have been called to Baghdad several times to ensure the security of parliament and politicians, including the president, because they are reliable.

Kurdish leaders oppose a constitutional amendment that would strengthen central power and take away some of their autonomy. They have territorial demands, in particular in Kirkuk, that, if accepted would double Kurdistan's present area, which is approximately 40,000 square kilometers, the size of Switzerland. Kirkuk is an obsession. A city of 700,000, it is populated in equal parts by Kurds, Turkmen and Shiite Arabs that Saddam Hussein relocated there as part of a brutal policy of forced Arabization. Kurdistan has an international airport in Erbil.

The Kurds' demands meet with rejection in Baghdad and make the Turks jittery. The Kurdish representatives the mission met say they have given up on independence but not on Kirkuk. They oppose Baghdad and Prime Minister al-Maliki and demand application of article 140 of the Constitution, which calls for "normalization", in other words the Kurds' return to Kirkuk, a census and a referendum.

Those statements led the mission to visit Turkey and sound out the position of that country's officials on the issue. The Turks have forged excellent businesses relations with the Kurds since Massoud Barzani stopped backing the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). Twenty million Kurds live in Turkey, six in Iraq, six in Syria and twelve in Iran. The Kurdish problem may not necessarily led to a secession, but it is a threat to country's future.

The last problem is reconstruction, which has been overshadowed by security issues until now. It will take \$60 billion to rebuild or repair Iraq's infrastructure. Oil output, which currently stands at just over two million barrels a day, could rise to six million if the oil infrastructure is updated, which assumes investments on the order of several tens of billions of dollars. But parliament has not passed the oil law yet. The army, which has no planes and few heavy weapons, also needs modernization and equipment. The Americans will leave equipment behind, but that will not solve the problem because it is very worn. Consequently there is a huge potential military equipment market.

None of that cancels out the positive aspects but it is too early to say whether Iraq is "out of the woods".

Lastly, Mr. François-Poncet addressed the issue of Iraq's future in its regional and international environment.

He said Iran is omnipresent in Iraq. The Iranian secret services have agents who have largely contributed to insecurity. Iran's leaders are hostile to the disengagement accord (SOFA) that the Iraqi government and the United States signed in December 2008. They would have preferred the United States to become paralyzed and bogged down in Iraq, leaving the country with their tail between their legs.

Does that mean Iran "pulls all the strings"? Probably not. The Iraqis do not want that, even though Iran is a big neighbor to be reckoned with.

Nevertheless, Iran has a very strong influence in Iraq. The Shiite religion is a bond between the two countries. The holy places of Shiism, Nadjaf and Kerbala, are in Iraq. It is hard to say how things will unfold.

France has an important role to play in Iraq. President Sarkozy's visit was highly appreciated despite its brevity. France has a good image, although it is clouded by the fact that the French opposed the United States' intervention, which, after all, eliminated Saddam Hussein, who persecuted the Shiite majority. Iraq is an important country with considerable resources.

Mr. François-Poncet paid tribute to the highly motivated embassy staff. The ambassador, who has been living in very precarious conditions for several years, is remarkable.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga recalled the history of the Iraq's creation and the successive divisions resulting from the Treaties of Sèvres, San Remo and Lausanne. Dependant on the colonial powers' oil interests, Iraq is a geographical entity that is not based on a national reality. She said the country does not have a parliamentary system in the conventional sense of the term and that all the positions and ministries are distributed exclusively based on confessional criteria. When taking action against fellow Shiites, Mr. Maliki was probably more interested in weakening his rivals than in statesmanship. Allegiance is owed mainly to the family, village, tribe and region.

Mr. Boulaud asked about the size of Iraq's oil reserves.

Mr. François-Poncet replied that if Iraq's dilapidated oil industry undergoes extensive modernization, in the long term it would be able to produce six million barrels a day. In comparison, Saudi output is approximately ten million barrels a day.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said oil was also Iraq's curse because the country was created, and Kurdistan was not, despite the fact that it was stipulated in the Treaty of Sèvres, when it was found in the Kirkuk fields.

Mr. Boulaud asked about the motives of the US intervention in Iraq, and in particular whether oil was the reason.

Mr. François-Poncet said that only historians could determine why the United States decided to invade Iraq, which has taken the lives of over 4,000 US soldiers and cost hundreds of billions of dollars for a favorable outcome seven years later. The rapporteur stated that, personally, he did not believe oil was the main reason. According to him, the Americans genuinely thought they would be greeted as liberators and that Iraq's oil revenues would pay the intervention's costs. They were wrong on both counts, but the biggest blunder, which nobody disputes any longer, was made by Paul Bremer, the US administrator for Iraq, who fueled the insurrection by dismissing Iraqi army officers without pay, and dissolved the Baas Party, which structured the administration and made the country work. It is very likely that the history of the US intervention would have been different if those two unfortunate decisions had not been made.

Daniel Reiner asked both rapporteurs about the Iraqis' perception of President Obama's election and a possible change in policy. He also questioned them about the presence of civilians in the conflict.

Mr. François-Poncet recalled that the Bush administration had signed SOFA and Barack Obama had not changed course: the accord happens to match the pullout timetable the new president wanted. On the second point he recalled that American civilian advisors were very present in the ministries.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said private military companies employing almost only non-Americans are omnipresent in Iraq. If war crimes are tried it will be very hard to determine whether the sub-contractors or the people who gave the orders are responsible.

She also said Turkey is the region's only country that can talk to everybody, including Hamas and Israel, without disapproval. Turkey has a stabilizing diplomacy in the Middle East. It is in contact with Syria and trying to separate that country from its alliance with Iran.

Mr. François-Poncet answered a question by Christian Cambon about Syria's relations with Iraq by saying that Damascus was not involved in Baghdad's affairs but had infiltrated Al Qaeda jihadists, and that he did not have the sense Iraq was doing anything to prevent that. He added that none of Iraq's neighbors, including Syria, had an interest in the country's destabilization.



## **Presentation of the rapporteurs' conclusions**

*(report of July 7, 2009)*

Mr. François-Poncet, who recalled the mission's various stages before giving a detailed account before the committee, said he and Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga would present their report's main conclusions, making a distinction between problems common to the whole region and problems specific to each country or group of countries.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga, who presented the first part of the report, about common problems, recalled that the Middle East countries are as different from one another as European countries and that, by and large, we know little about them. As possible causes she mentioned that we have forgotten their history, remembering only images of violence, even though their peoples have never been as educated and developed, and that we view Islam as a conservative, archaic religion. She said Islam can be no more equated with the Taliban than Catholicism with the Inquisition or Protestantism with the witches of Salem.

It is important to keep in mind that Arab public opinion and governments have not forgotten the colonial period and its after-effects continuing today in Western policy and interventions.

She added that Middle East societies are changing at a brisk pace. The biggest change involves the demographic transition, the stage in a society's history when couples start controlling their fertility. It is under way, although by no means complete, in the Middle East. The women's fertility rate in the Middle East fell from 6.8% in 1975 to 3.7% in 2005. Tunisia has a lower fertility rate than France. This access to modernity causes social disorientation that is becoming tumultuous and convulsive.

Then Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga brought up the status of women. She noted that the spread of the veil had helped to increase the number of girls in school in the working classes, underscoring that wearing the veil was an ambivalent indicator and a paradoxical factor of progress but also the sign of a return to traditionalist religious norms. She said the terms "re-Islamization" and "return of religion" are deceiving because the Middle East has always been deeply Muslim. Referring to Amin Maalouf's book *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, and to the fact that religious beliefs, because they are more durable than ideologies, offer people an identity to which they can cling, she added that Islam had rebecome the social norm in reaction to Westernization.

Lastly, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga quickly mentioned the gulf between peoples and governments, those people's tormented relationship with the West, and the expectation everywhere of "more Europe and less America". She concluded by mentioning the abundance of energy resources and the widespread water shortage, a vital threat.

Mr. François-Poncet presented the region's particular problems by first mentioning the three challenges it is facing.

The first challenge, which dates back to 1948, is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At first this was an Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab problem but it now has an Israeli-Western component. He expressed surprise that the Israelis have not decided between a single binational State, which can only lead to the dilution, if not disappearance, of its Jewish identity, and the two-State solution, which the West has long promoted in all the parameters since the Taba talks and President Clinton's proposals. The political decision was the only thing missing, he added. Mr. François-Poncet said Israel cannot solve the dilemma because its security is assured and its army is superior to any other in the region. The combination of those two factors partly accounts for its leaders' procrastination, but the main reason lies with Israel's political system and full proportional representation, which leads to many parties and shaky majorities. Politically too weak to make peace and militarily too strong to need it, Israel will only change course under pressure from the United States. From that viewpoint, President Obama, unlike President Bush, who never dared to say it during his two terms, has come out in favor of the two-State solution and demanded a complete halt to settlements. The question is knowing how determined he will be in the long term and whether he will stand up to the pro-Israel lobby. Mr. François-Poncet said the mission had met the main ones in Washington and New York, and that they dispose of sizeable human and financial resources. For the moment President Obama has a wide margin of maneuver but it is unsure if he will keep it a long time.

Then Mr. François-Poncet mentioned the second challenge, Iran's nuclear program, which may result in an arms race throughout the region. He recalled that there are questions on whether the program is military, which Iranian officials firmly deny. According to him, although no formal proof that the program is military exists, a set of clues point in that direction, including the refusal to answer the IAEA's questions, the questionable economic rationality of developing nuclear power for civilian purposes and the development of an advanced ballistic missile program. He added that the facilities necessary for the earliest uranium enrichment cycles, such as the ones at Natanz, cover a large surface area and are hard to hide, but plants involved in the final stages of enrichment are much smaller and could be easily concealed. He concluded that the program, which for the moment has no economic or technical rationality, could have a military purpose. If that were the case, can it be stopped? Mr. François-Poncet said the Iranian regime is unpopular but not threatened and that dissensions are starting to appear in the country's religious elite. The regime is based on sound foundations, such as the pasdarans and basidj. Sanctions are working whereas the talks in the five-plus-one framework have been a failure. Sanctions can be strengthened to make the regime move. When asked whether the current unrest is likely to push Iran towards openness or a harder line, he replied that intransigence is the likely option because the regime needs enemies to survive.

Then Mr. François-Poncet mentioned Yemen, the third and last challenge. Yemen is not yet a failed State but looks as though it is on the brink of becoming one. He recalled the September 2008 attack on the United States embassy, which killed 16 people, and the fact that President Ali Abdullah Saleh's

authority extends no further than the capital. The rapporteur mentioned the Houti rebellion in northern Yemen, irredentist temptations in the south and insecurity in the Hadramaout region, where the bin Laden family has its roots. He said the situation was all the more alarming because the country was becoming a new base for Al Qaeda.

Mr. François-Poncet then mentioned the reasons to hope for an improvement in the Middle East situation, first among them the change in US policy. He touched on the rebirth of Iraq due to the improvement in security, the progress of democracy and an active parliament, but also recalled the deterioration of infrastructure, which must be entirely rebuilt, and the need for the Iraqis to establish rules to share the oil wealth.

Mr. François-Poncet mentioned the consolidation of the Saudi regime, which for a time was shaken by homegrown terrorists. He paid tribute to King Abdallah, a cautious but determined reformer who is popular at home and influential in the region. Financial reserves based on oil wealth have been wisely invested and the economic crisis will affect Saudi Arabia less than other countries. He said the governing class is about to change generations; the succession law should make it possible to find a way to decide between the various pretenders.

Mr. François-Poncet said the Gulf States, especially the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain, present a new face of Arab modernity, demonstrated by architectural developments and by Qatar's interest in education or Abu Dhabi's in culture. He voiced regret that the regimes' social outlook is still conservative.

Mr. François-Poncet expressed deep satisfaction that Al Qaeda is on the run and has nearly disappeared from Iraq.

Then he addressed the Middle East's recurring issues, including President Hosni Mubarak's succession. The choice has not been made between his son Gamal and Omar Souleiman, which worries observers in the region, especially since the battle for succession is starting in a terrible economic climate.

He said President Sarkozy was right to renew contact with Syria's president Bashar al-Assad Syria and that a wedge could not be driven between that country and its traditional ally Iran unless and until Syria recovered the Golan Heights, which is currently out of the question for Israel's leaders.

With regard to Lebanon, Mr. François-Poncet mentioned the problem of confessionalism and the importance of Shiite Hezbollah, which has set up a State within the State and has close ties with Teheran.

Then Mr. François-Poncet presented the mission's recommendations to the committee.

First, he said no progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is possible without direct contact with Hamas. The mission met Khaled Meshaal in Damascus, which was anathema to Israel's political leaders. He also said France and the Europeans support the United States president's policy of putting maximum pressure on Israeli leaders, in particular to lift the Gaza blockade and agree to stop settlements.

He considers it an understatement to say that relations between Iran and France are not good and described a luncheon hosted by Iran's ambassador in France during which the ambassador made unacceptable judgments about our country. It is a good idea to support the United States' policy of overture but, in the event of failure, it seems clear to him that the West will have to choose between the bomb and bombing, which does not preclude pursuing efforts and pressuring Iran into accepting all the IAEA inspections in the framework of the NPT.

He said Yemen urgently requires attention and closer ties with Syria are a good thing. The restoration of diplomatic relations with Damascus will let France exert useful though limited pressure.

Mr. de Rohan, who recalled the US president's very strong positions in favor in the two-State solution, wondered about the significance of Vice-President Joe Biden's statement that the United States could not prevent Israel from attacking Iran's nuclear sites. He was surprised the statement was made without consulting the countries of the Atlantic alliance and wondered if that meant the pro-Israeli lobby had become much more active in the United States. Mr. Netanyahou said he understood the US president's message but has done nothing since.

Chairman de Rohan wondered whether, considering the positions of China and Russia, which would probably veto stronger sanctions, Iran was heading towards becoming a nuclear power, which would likely lead to a regional nuclear arms race and the end of the NPT. If that happened, would dissuasion play a role?

Mr. de Rohan said it was conceivable to consider a role for the European Union in the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, adding that he is shocked by the Israeli government's firmness in pursuing settlements, maintaining checkpoints and refusing to lift the blockade. He wants the European Union to support President Obama's policy.

In response to Chairman de Rohan, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said Israel seeks to shift the West's attention to Iran in order to avoid having to settle the Palestinian problem. The pro-Israel lobby probably influences Joe Biden. The Americans will stand firm only when Israeli policy threatens their vital interests. The Israelis are highly dependent on the United States, which could easily put pressure on them.

With regard to European Union policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said Sweden, which has just assumed the Union presidency, could probably help define a clear, more consistent policy towards Israel. If that happens, she added, the present European governments would probably follow the recommendations in the text drafted by former European foreign affairs ministers and officials, signed by her fellow senator and co-rapporteur Mr. François-Poncet, supporting contact with all the parties to the conflict, including Hamas.

In response to Chairman de Rohan's question on Iran, Mr. François-Poncet said he thinks it is good policy for President Obama to let his vice-

president warn Iran that the United States would not be able to stop Israel from attacking its nuclear sites. If the US and Europe came to terms with a nuclear Iran, the rapporteur said he would be worried about the region's possible nuclearization. The stabilizing role atomic weapons play between India and Pakistan is not necessarily transposable to the Middle East.

Mr. de Rohan said every time Iranian leaders make outrageous outbursts, the Israelis take advantage of it to shift attention away from Palestine and that everybody knows that is what they are trying to do.

Mr. François-Poncet said the Israeli press echoes US pressure and is preparing people for the fact that illegal settlements will have to be evacuated by mulling over solutions (evacuation to legal settlements and construction of high-rises). The United States has sent Senator George Mitchell to the region to remind the Israelis about President Obama's requests and the fact that they must be answered. If the situation remains deadlocked the president will be confronted with his policy's failure. With regard to the Palestinians, the issue is knowing with whom one is negotiating. If Hamas is left out of the talks, it will sabotage them by contesting the decisions taken.

Mr. Boulaud said he ranks among those who think that, if Iran does acquire nuclear weapons, the certainty of annihilation should suffice to dissuade it from using them. From Iran's viewpoint, if India, Pakistan, Israel, Russia and the United States have the bomb there is no reason it should not as well. President Obama renounced the anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. Does that mean dissuasion is back at the forefront? He said the statement by the head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence service, that Iran's nuclear program would not produce a weapon until 2015 instead of 2010 annoyed the Israeli prime minister and asked the rapporteurs if that information were accurate.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said the debate over the bomb was ongoing because, although the reasons pushing Iran to acquire one are understandable, the nuclearization of the Middle East is something to be feared.

Mr. Chevènement recalled that Iran said it does not want to acquire nuclear weapons and that, although all the clues suggest the Islamic Republic's leaders are indeed pursuing a military objective, for the moment the program is in compliance with the NPT. He mentioned the possibility that Iran is only seeking to reach the threshold and develop a civilian nuclear industry. Mr. Chevènement added that he is less pessimistic than the rapporteurs about the likelihood that Hamas and the Palestinian Authority will form a unity government. On the other hand, he said he is less optimistic about Iraq's democratic progress, recalling that building a nation assumes that its components are homogeneous to a certain degree, which is not the case in that country. Nation-building is a very long process on a historic scale. The pullout of US forces will probably be the hour of truth and it seems too early to celebrate. Iraq has become a big Lebanon.

In response to a question about how much time Iran needs to acquire nuclear weapons, Mr. François-Poncet said that, according to the information the rapporteurs have, if the program is indeed military, the country would be in a position to have its first nuclear device towards late 2010 but would not have a dissuasive military force until 2015. The rapporteur expressed optimism about

Iraq, saying that Baghdad is still in a state of siege but the besiegers are gone. He added that the recent surge of deadly attacks does not cast doubt on the overall improvement of security. Mr. François-Poncet said that for the moment the danger is less the divisions between Shiites and Sunnis than the fact that the Kurds are not backing down on their demands for Kirkuk and the attachment of land that, if accepted, would double the size of their autonomous region.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said the inter-Palestinian dialogue is at a standstill. Egyptian officials had set July 7 as the deadline for dialogue, but they have just announced that the date is being postponed to July 25. The obstacles are the government's program, the voting system, the security forces and the integration of Hamas into the PLO. But the Quartet's demand for prior recognition of Israel is actually what has blocked the dialogue. The real deadline is September 25, the convocation date of the elections scheduled in January 2010. European mediation could contribute to breaking the deadlock, but that assumes prior recognition of the Hamas's victory in the 2005 Palestinian elections.

Mr. Reiner asked the rapporteurs about Iran's nuclear program, adding that the regime has been unpopular for at least 15 years. He said the temptation would be great to think that extremists are the only ones who want to develop a weapons program, but the country's entire population is behind it. He asked about the guarantees China, Russia and the West could give the Middle East if Iran did become a nuclear power. Has the West helped or hindered the Middle East in its evolution towards modernity? He said he feels indignant seeing Europe standing idly by when the Israeli army regularly destroys all its investments in Palestine, in particular in Gaza, and is willing to start all over again as though nothing had happened.

In response Mr. François-Poncet said the Iranian regime's unpopularity is nothing new, pointing to the high voter abstention rate in the last elections, but that it has never been so strong. He added that the entire population supports the nuclear program because the Iranian people's glorious past dating back thousands of years has made them deeply nationalistic.

Ms. Cerisier-ben Guiga said that if we let the Middle East countries find their own road to modernity it would be much simpler for them.

Mr. François-Poncet said the main European countries had agreed on a common position, although Germany says little about the issue for obvious historical reasons and the Netherlands has a systematically pro-Israeli attitude. The rapporteur said he agrees with Mr. Reiner that the destruction of buildings in Gaza built by Europe was intolerable and that the absence of protest was even more intolerable.

Recalling a trip to the Middle East, Marcel-Pierre Cléach said all the people he met are convinced Iran will carry out its nuclear ambitions to the very end and that Israel, which expects nothing from international negotiations, would intervene to destroy its uranium production sites.

Mr. François-Poncet responded by saying that Denis Ross, President Obama's special advisor on the issue, has voiced his conviction Israel will attack Iran, but only if its existential interest are in danger.

## **APPENDIX 1 - List of people met**

### **I.- HEARINGS IN PARIS**

- **Mr. Henry Laurens**, professor at the Collège de France (*September 10, 2008*)
- **Mr. Gérard Araud**, assistant secretary-general at the ministry of foreign affairs, director-general of political and security affairs (*September 10, 2008*)
- **Mr. Yves Aubin de la Messuzière**, associate researcher at the Middle East Mediterranean department at Sciences-Po, vice-president of the Institut du Monde Arabe (*September 23, 2008*)
- **Mr. Jean-Claude Cousseran**, former ambassador, former director-general of external security (DGSE) (*September 23, 2008*)
- **Mr. Gilles Kepel**, chair of the Middle East Mediterranean department at Sciences Po (*September 24, 2008*)
- **Mr. Alain Chouet**, associate researcher at the European Security Intelligence and Strategy Center, lecturer in contemporary criminal threats, Université de Paris II (*September 25, 2008*)
- **Mr. Olivier Appert**, director of the Institut français du pétrole (*September 25, 2008*)
- **Mr. Antoine Sfeir**, journalist, director of *Cahiers de l'Orient* (*September 30, 2008*)
- **Mr. François Thual**, professor of geostrategy at the Ecole de guerre (*September 30, 2008*)
- **Mr. Olivier Caron**, director of strategy and external relations and director of international relations at the Commissariat à l'énergie atomique (CEA) (*October 7, 2008*)
- **Mr. Patrice Paoli**, director of North Africa and the Middle East, ministry of foreign and European affairs (*October 7, 2008 and April 10, 2009*)
- **Mr. François Burgat**, director of the Institut français du Proche-Orient in Damascus (*October 8, 2008*)
- **H. E. Mr. Mohamed al-Sheikh**, ambassador of Saudi Arabia (*October 15, 2008*)
- **Mr. Christian Nakhlé**, consul-general of France in Jeddah (*October 16, 2008*)

- **Mr. Mohamed Hilal**, chargé d'affaires for the United Arab Emirates (*October 16, 2008*)
- **Mr. Jean-François Girault**, ambassador of France in Iraq
- **H. E. Mr. Hatem Seil El Nasr**, ambassador of Egypt in France (*November 17, 2008*)
- **Mr. Alexis le Cour Grandmaison**, in charge of North Africa and the Middle East at the foreign affairs ministry analysis and forecasting centre, (*November 26, 2008*)
- **Mr. Dominique Woloch**, former first secretary at the French embassy in Yemen (*November 27, 2008*)
- **Mr. Emmanuel Todd**, historian, demographer (*November 27, 2008*)
- **Ms. Khalidja al Salami**, Yemeni writer and filmmaker (*December 4, 2008*)
- **Mr. Jean-Pierre Filiu**, researcher at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (*December 15, 2008*)
- **H. E. Mr. Daniel Shek**, ambassador of Israel in France (*December 17, 2008*)
- **Mr. Ludovic Pouille**, assistant director Egypt-Middle East, ministry of foreign and European affairs (*December 18, 2008*)
- **Ms. Hind Khoury**, delegate-general of Palestine in France
- **Mr. Henry Siegman**, director of the US/Middle East Project (*February 9, 2009 and May 5, 2009*)
- **Mr. Cédric Parisot**, CNRS, Institut français de Jérusalem (*March 3, 2009*)
- **Mr. Laurent Bonnefoy**, CNRS, Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales de Saana (*March 3, 2009*)
- **H. E. Mr. Nasser Mohamed Youssef Al Belooshi**, ambassador of Bahrain in France (*March 16, 2009*)
- **Mr. François Heisbourg**, director of the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (*March 17, 2009*)
- **H. E. Mr. Seyed Mahdi Miraboutalebi**, ambassador of Iran (*March 24, 2009*)
- **Mr. Pierre-Jean Luizard**, researcher at the CNRS (*March 26, 2009*)
- **Mr. Yves Oudin**, ambassador of France in Bahrain (*March 27, 2009*)
- **Mr. Hosham Dawod**, researcher at the CNRS: EHESS, specialist on Iraq and Shiism (*April 9, 2009*)
- **Mr. Steffen Hertog**, professor, Mediterranean-Middle East department at Sciences Po (*April 9, 2009*)
- **Mr. Michel Guérin**, deputy director of counter-terrorism at the Direction centrale du renseignement intérieur (DCRI) (*May 5, 2009*)



- **Mr. Thierry Coville**, researcher at the IRIS and specialist on the Iranian economy (*May 5, 2009*)
- **Mr. Bernard Hourcade**, director of research at the CNRS, specialist on Iran (*May 5, 2009*)
- **Mr. Bruno Tertrais**, researcher at the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (*June 2, 2009*)
- **Mr. Jean-François Legrain**, researcher at the CNRS/GREMMO (*July 6, 2009*)

## II - VISITS IN FRANCE

- **United States Embassy**, General Petraeus' political advisor (*February 10, 2009*)
- **D.R.M. - General Benoît Puga**, (*February 11, 2009*)
- **S.G.D.N. - General Jean Coulloume-Labarthe – Mr. Jean-Philippe Bouyer** (*February 11, 2009*)
- **D.G.S.E. - Mr. Erard Corbin de Mangoux** (*February 13, 2009*)
- **EADS – Astrium - Alain Charmeau, François Deneu, Bruno Duthoit** (*March 27, 2009*)
- **CEA – DAM – Mr. Daniel Verwaerde** (*June 3, 2009*)

## III - TRIPS TO SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN, ABU DHABI, DUBAI AND QATAR

### *Saturday, October 18 - Venice*

- **Eurogolfe symposium: *Preconditions for a stability framework in the region***
- **HRH Prince Turki al-Faisal**
- **Mr. Mounib Al-Masri**, president of the Palestinian Forum
- **Mr. Henri Siegman** – president of US/Middle East project
- **Mr. Gilles Kepel** – president of Eurogolfe

### *Monday, October 20 - Riyadh*

- **Mr. Bertrand Besancenot**, ambassador of France in Saudi Arabia, and the department heads

- **Mr. Abdullah Ahmed Youssef Zeinal Ali Reeza**, minister of trade and industry
- **Dr. Saleh Abdulah Bin Hemaïd**, president of the Majliss al-Shura consultative council
- **Dr. Sadaqa bin Yehya bin Hamza Fadel**, chairman of the foreign affairs committee
- **Dr. Abdulaziz bin Ibrahim Al-Manee**, president of the France-Saudi Arabia friendship group
- **Mr. Rihab Massoud**, special advisor to Prince Bandar bin Sultan – national security council
- **Col. Jean-Philippe Bonnet**, defense attaché
- **Admiral Oudot de Dainville**, (president, ODAS)

***Tuesday, October 21– Riyadh***

- **Mr. Andrew Hammonds**, journalist at the Reuters Agency
- **Mr. Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy**, chairman of the human rights committee
- **HRH Prince Saud Al-Faysal**, minister of foreign affairs
- **HRH Prince Al Waleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud**, businessman
- **Prince Mohamed Bin Nayef**, deputy minister of the interior
- **Mr. Kamel S. Al-Munajjed**, Franco-Saudi affairs advisor

***Wednesday, October 22 - Riyadh***

- **HRH Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz al Saud**, governor of the Riyadh region
- **Dr. Assad Al-Shamlan**, assistant professor, Centre for European Studies (Diplomatic Institute)
- **Saudi businesswomen**

***Wednesday, October 22 – Jeddah***

- **Mr. Jamal Khashoggi**, editor-in-chief of *Al-Watan*
- Interview with the mayor of Jeddah and four businessmen from the **Bin Laden group**
- Interview with representatives of the company **Aéroports de Paris**

***Thursday, October 23 - Sana'a***

- **Mr. Gilles Gauthier**, ambassador of France in Yemen, and the department heads
- **Mr. Martin Deffontaines**, director of Total, Yemen

***Friday, October 24– Sana'a***

- Interview with the **European ambassadors**

***Saturday, 25 October – Sana'a***

- **Dr. Abdelmalek Al-Mekhlafi**, senator, vice-chairman of the Shura Commission
- **Sheikh Abdulaziz Abdulghani**, senator
- **Mr. Ali Mohamed Mujawar**, prime minister
- **Mr. Rashed Al-Alimi**, deputy prime minister in charge of defense and security affairs
- **Mr. Abou Bakr Al-Qirbi**, minister of foreign affairs
- Meeting with **CEFAS researchers**
- **Mr. Stephen A. Seche**, ambassador of the United States in Yemen
- Meeting with **foreign trade advisors** (Total, Yemen-LNG, Accord, Calyon, Spie, France-Télécom and EDF)

***Sunday, October 26 - Abu Dhabi***

- **Mr. Alain Azouaou**, ambassador of France to the United Arab Emirates, and the department heads

***Monday, October 27– Abu Dhabi***

- **H.E. Mr. Edward Oakden**, ambassador of Great Britain to the United Arab Emirates
- **Mr. Ahmad Bin Chebib Al Dhahiri**, first vice-president of the National Federal Council
- **Dr Anwar Gargash**, secretary of State for foreign affairs of the United Arab Emirates
- **Colonel Hervé Cherel**, visit to the French naval base
- **Mr. Ashraf Hamdi Fouad** and **Mr. Emile Hokayem** journalists

***Tuesday, October 28 - Dubai***

- **Ms. Nadia Yafi**, consul of France in Dubai
- **Mr. Shebab Gargash**, director of Daman Investments PSC
- **Mr. Henry Soleyn**, lawyer and French foreign trade advisor
- **Mr. Abdul Rahman Al Rashed**, director-general of Al Arabiya News Channel
- **Mr. Abdulaziz O. Sager**, director of the Gulf Research Center, specialist on the region's strategic affairs, and **Mr. Christian Koch**, director

***Wednesday, October 29 - Doha***

- **Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani**, Emir of Qatar
- **Mr. Satnam Matharu** – head of International and Media Relations, Al Jazeera and **Mr. Jamil Azar**, editor–anchorman
- **Mr. Joseph Evan LeBaron**, ambassador of the United States

***Thursday, October 30 - Doha***

- **Georgetown University**, talk by Mr. Patrick Laude in the framework of a course on French civilization– questions/answers with the students
- **Dr Mohamed Fathy Saoud**, president of the Qatar Foundation
- **H.E.Ahmad bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud**, foreign affairs minister of Qatar

**IV – TRIPS TO SYRIA, LEBANON, ISRAEL AND PALESTINE**

***Sunday, January 18 - Damascus***

- **Mr. Michel Duclos**, ambassador of France in Syria, and heads of departments
- **Mr. Peter Harling**, International Crisis Group
- **Mr. Philippe de Fontaine-Vives**, vice-president of the EIB

***Monday, January 19 - Damascus***

- **Lieutenant-Colonel Marc de Block**, defense attaché at the military mission
- **Ms. Sylvie Sturel**, head of the economic mission
- **Mr. Mahmoud El-Abrache**, President of the People's Assembly
- **Ms. Houda Homsy-Ajlani**, president of the People's Assembly France-Syria friendship group
- **Mr. Hatem Nuseibeh**, Chairman and CEO of Total

***Tuesday, January 20 - Damascus***

- **Mr. Haytham Maleh**, lawyer, human rights campaigner
- **Ms. Souheir Atassi**, member of the Damascus Declaration
- **Mr. Khaled Meshaal**, political leader of Hamas
- Working session at the Orient Studies Center, directed by **Mr. Samir Al Taqi**, in the company of **Ms. Hala Barbera**, lawyer, **Mr. Zyad Arbash**, economist, **Mr. Samir Seifan**, economist and **Mr. Tawfik Sawaf**, specialist on the Israel-Palestine issue

***Wednesday, January 21 - Damascus***

- **Mr. Christophe Audic**, first secretary
- **Mr. Frédéric Alegre**, liaison officer
- **Mr. Simon Collis**, ambassador of Great Britain in Syria
- **Mssrs. Francois Burgat, Hassan Abbas, Bruno Paoli**, researchers at the Institut Français du Proche Orient
- **Ms. Maura Connelly**, chargée d'affaires at the United States embassy
- **Mr. Waddah Abd Rabbo**, editor-in-chief of *Al-Watan*

***Thursday, January 22 - Damascus***

- **Mr. Walid Al Mouallem**, foreign affairs minister of the Syrian Arab Republic
- **Mr. Pradeilles**, principal of the Lycée Charles de Gaulle

***Thursday, January 22 - Beirut***

- **Mr. André Parant**, ambassador of France in Lebanon, and the department heads
- **General Michel Sleiman**, President of the Lebanese Republic
- **Mr. Hussein Hajj Hassan**, Hezbollah deputy
- Interview with **Mr. Abdel Latif Zein**, Nabatieh deputy, chairman of the Chamber of Deputies foreign affairs committee
- **Mr. Nasser Nasrallah**, deputy from West Bekaa and Rashaya representing the president of the Chamber of Deputies

***Friday, January 23 - Beirut***

- **Mr. Fouad Siniora**, President of the Council of Ministers

- **Mr. Samir Geagea**, head of the Lebanese Forces
- Meeting with journalists: Ms. **Rosanna Bou Monsef** (*Annahar*) – Mr. **Nicolas Nassif** (*Al Akhbar*), Mr. **Mahmoud Harb** (*L'Orient le jour*) – Ms. **Valérie Debahy** (*al Balad*) – Ms. **Hala Saghbini** (*Al Moustaqbal*) – Mr. **Georges Alam** (*Assafir*)
- **Mr. Amin Gemayel**, former President of the Republic
- **General Michel Aoun**, deputy, head of the Free Patriotic Movement
- **Mr. Saad Hariri**, deputy, head of the Movement of the Future
- **Mr. Walid Jumblatt**, deputy, head of the Progressive Socialist Party

**Saturday, January 24 - Beirut**

- **Mr. Gabriele Checchia**, ambassador of Italy in Lebanon
- **Mr. Michael Williams**, UN special coordinator for Lebanon
- Lunch with **Mr. Marwan Hamade**, former minister and deputy from the Shuf, **Mr. Issa Ghoraieb**, editorialist at *L'Orient le Jour*, **Mr. Talal Salman**, director of the newspaper *As Safir*, **Mr. Ahmed Beydoun**, sociologist and historian, professor at Lebanese University, **Mr. Walid Charara**, researcher and opposition columnist, **Mr. Charles Ayoub**, director of the newspaper *Addyar*, **Ms. Michele J. Sison**, ambassador of the United States, **Mr. Michel Murr**, deputy, president of the Senate Lebanon-France group
- **Mr. Elias Murr**, minister of defense

**Sunday, January 25– Naquoura base**

- Presentation of the base and briefing on the activities of the new UNIFIL
- **General Claudio Graziano**, UNIFIL commander
- **General Olivier de Bavinchove**, UNIFIL second in command

**Sunday, January 25– Tel Aviv**

- Meeting with Israeli journalists specializing in Israeli-Palestinian issues (**Amos Harel** and **Akiva Eldar** of *Haaretz* and **Smadar Peri** of *Yediot Aharonot*)

**Monday, January 26– Tel Aviv**

- **Mr. Haim Oron**, president of Meretz
- **Mr. Jean-Michel Casa**, ambassador of France in Israel, and the department heads
- **Mr. Avi Primor**, former ambassador of Israel in Germany and to the European Union, director of the European studies center at IDC University in Herzliya.

- **Gen. Shlomo Brom**, Senior Research Associate at the Institute for National Security Studies

***Tuesday, January 27– Tel Aviv***

- **Mr. David Zonshein**, reserve officer, founder of "The Courage to Refuse" movement
- **Mr. Gidi Grinstein**, director of the Reut Institute, government advisor on long-term strategic decisions
- Interview with representatives of Israeli NGOs (**Yariv Oppenheimer**, Peace Now; **Jessica MONTELL**, Betselem; **Hadass ZIV**, Physicians for Human Rights; and **Ruth KEDAR**, Yesh Din)
- **Mr. James Gunnangham**, ambassador of the United States in Israel
- **Mr. Tom Philips**, ambassador of Great Britain in Israel

***Tuesday, January 27 - Jerusalem***

- Meeting with **French researchers at the Centre de Recherche Français de Jérusalem**

***Wednesday, January 28– Abu Dis and Ramallah***

- **Mr. Ahmed Qorei** (Abu Ala), former president of the parliament, former prime minister
- Interview with officials from the **Palestinian Red Crescent**
- **Mr. Ahmed Soboh**, deputy minister of foreign affairs
- **Mr. Salam Fayyad**, prime minister
- Lunch with members of the **Palestinian Legislative Council: Khaleda Jarrar** (PFLP); **Bernard Sabella** (Fatah); **Abdarahim Barham** (Fatah); **Intisar Al Wazir** (Fatah)
- **Ms. Fadwa Barghouti**, wife of Marwan Barghouti
- **Mr. Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO negotiating team

***Thursday, January 29 - Gaza***

- **Mr. Shaar Habil**, member of board of directors of the American School (destroyed during the military operations)
- **Meeting with doctors at Al Qods Hospital;**
- **Interview with the UNWRA representative**

***Thursday, January 29 - Ashqelon***

- Interviews with members of the **French community of Ashqelon**
- **Colonel Alain Faugeras**, head of the EU-BAM mission – Rafah

***Friday, January 30***

- **Mr. Philippe Lazzarini**, head of OCHA for the Palestinian Territories
- **Mr. Bernard Sabella**, deputy in the PLC (Fatah), director Saint-Joseph Hospital (East Jerusalem)
- **Mr. Robert Danin**, head of the OQR (Office of the Quartet Representative, Mr. Tony Blair)
- Meeting with French press correspondents: **Mr. Charles Enderlin** (France2); Mr. Michel Bôle-Richard (*Le Monde*); **Mr. François Clauss** (Europe 1); **Mr. Guillaume Auda** (RTL, France 24); **Mr. Christophe Boltanski** (*Nouvel Observateur*); **Mr. Frédéric Barreyre** (Radio France)

**IV - EGYPT**

***Monday, February 23***

- **Mr. Jean-Félix Paganon**, ambassador of France in Egypt, and the department heads
- **Mr. Sayyed Meshaal**, minister of military production
- **Mr. Saad Katatni**, head of the Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary group
- **Mr. Mustafa Al-Fiqqi**, chairman of the People's Assembly foreign affairs committee
- **Mr. Mohamed Abdellah**, NDP secretary for foreign relations and chairman of the NDP political studies committee, and Mr. Ali Maher (ex-ambassador of Egypt in Paris, member of the same committee)
- Dinner with researchers from the Al-Ahram strategic studies and research: **Amr Chubaki**, **Dia Reshouane**, **Hala Mustafa** and researchers from the CEDEJ: **Marc Lavergne**, **Hadjar Aourdi**, **Khaled Al-Khamissi**



*Tuesday, February 24*

- **Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit**, foreign affairs minister
- **Mr. Abou Ela Madi**, Muslim Brotherhood dissident and founder of the Wassat Party (not recognized)
- **Mr. Youssef Boutros-Ghali**, finance minister
- **Mr. Olivier Ordas**, police attaché
- **Mr. Omar Souleiman**, head of intelligence services
- Dinner with members of the **opposition party**: **Rifaat Said** (Tagammu) and **Ahmed Hassan** (Nasser Party) and **Fahmi Houweidi** (journalist) and **Mahmoud Abaza** (*Al-Wafd*)

*Wednesday, February 25*

- **Mr. Mohamed Bassiouni**, chairman of the Consultative Council's Arab affairs, foreign affairs and national security committee, former ambassador of Egypt in Israel
- **Sheikh Sayyed Tantawi**, grand imam of Al-Azhar Islamic University
- **Ms. Margaret Scobey**, ambassador of the United States
- **Colonel Christian Herrou**, defense attaché
- **Ms. Françoise Meley**, head of the economic mission

*Thursday, February 26*

- **Ms. Naela Gabr**, director of multilateral affairs (non-proliferation) at the foreign affairs ministry
- **Mr. Ahmed Salama** – *Le nouvel Orient*
- **Mr. Gérard Peytrignet**, head of the ICCR delegation in Cairo
- Meeting with a blogger belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood
- Dinner with **Mr. Jean-Pierre Debaere**, cultural advisor, and **representatives of civil society**

**VI - TRIPS TO JORDAN, IRAQ, BAHRAIN AND KUWAIT**

*Sunday, March 29 - Amman*

- **Mr. Denys GAUER**, ambassador of France in Jordan, and the department heads

- **Mr. Zeid Rifai**, president of the Senate
- **Mr. Abdul Hadi Majali**, president of the Chamber of Representatives
- **Mr. Nabil Sharif**, minister of media and communication, government spokesman, minister of foreign affairs *ad interim*
- **Mr. Faysal Al Fayez**, president of the foreign affairs committee, former prime minister
- **Mr. Zaki Ben Irshid**, secretary-general of the Islamic Action Front
- **"Jerusalem Forum"**
- **Mr. Adnan Abu Odeh**, former head of the Royal Court
- **HRH Prince Hassan**

***Monday, March 30 - Baghdad***

- **Mr. Jean-François Girault**, ambassador of France, and the department heads
- **Mr. Jawad Al-Bolani**, minister of the interior
- Meeting with Iraqi professors and students at the French cultural centre of Baghdad
- **Mr. Barhem Saleh**, deputy prime minister

***Tuesday, March 31 - Baghdad***

- **Mr. Khaled al-Attiya**, vice-president of the parliament
- **Sheikh Humam Hamoudi**, chairman of the Iraqi parliament's foreign affairs committee and **Mr. Abdel Bari Zebari** and **Ms. Tania Talahat Gilly**, members of the Franco-Iraqi friendship group
- **Mr. Tarek Al-Hashemi**, vice-president of the Republic of Iraq
- **Dr Hachem Mostapha**, deputy minister of foreign affairs
- **General Raymond T. Odierno**, commander-in-chief of the coalition forces in Iraq, Camp Victory
- Representatives of civil society: **Père Youcef**, Dominican, **Dr. Balkis Jawad**, professor of political science at the University of Baghdad, lawyer and **Amid Nasser**, Ph.D. student
- **Mr. Adel Abdel-Mehdi**, vice-president of the Republic of Iraq

***Wednesday, April 1, Baghdad***

- **General Abdel Kader Al-Obaidi**, minister of defense
- **Mr. Barham Saleh**, vice-premier minister

- Interview with journalists: **Mr. Sammy Ketz**, director of the AFP in Baghdad, **Mr. Ned Parker**, *Los Angeles Times*, **Ms. Alissa Rubin**, *New York Times*
- **Mr. Christopher Prentice**, ambassador of Great Britain
- Interview with Iraqi journalists: **Mr. Youssef Selman**, managing editor; **Najah al-Rikabi**, desk editor at *Machreq*; **Mr. Ali Khusbak**, editor-in-chief of the *Baghdad* newspaper; **Mr. Kazem al-Moqdadi**, of the Bagdadiya private network; **Mr. Abdel Latif al-Moussawi**, *Zaman* newspaper

**Thursday, April 2 - Manama- Bahrain**

- **Mr. Yves Oudin**, ambassador of France, and the department heads

**Friday, April 3 - Manama- Bahrain**

- **Mr. Jamal Fakhro**, vice-president of the Shura and various other Shura members

**Saturday, April 4 - Manama - Bahrain**

- **Mr. Nizar Bahrana**, secretary of State for foreign affairs
- **Mr. Alain Lechevallier**, former Total executive

**Sunday, April 5 - Kuwait City**

- **Mr. Jean-René Gehan**, ambassador of France, and the department heads
- **Captain Pierre Leterme**, commander of the mines group
- **Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah**, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Kuwait
- **Mr. Khaled Sulaiman al-Jarallah**, undersecretary of State for foreign affairs
- **Cheikh Thamer al-Sabah**, vice-president of the national security office
- **Ms. Deborah K. Jones**, ambassador of the United States
- **Mr. Khorafi**, president of the parliament of Kuwait
- **Mr. Hussein Afshar**, Iranian businessman

## **VI - KURDISTAN AND TURKEY**

### ***Wednesday, May 6 – Erbil***

- **Mr. Falah Mustafa**, head of the GRK's external relations department

### ***Thursday, May 7 – Erbil***

- **Mr. Jaafar Mustafa**, minister of the peshmergas
- **Mr. Massoud Barzani**, president of the region
- **Mr. Adnan Mufti**, president of the parliament
- **Mr. Karim Sinjari**, minister of the interior
- **Mr. Masrur Barzani**, head of the intelligence services
- **Mr. Claude Poulet**, the French embassy in Baghdad

### ***Friday, May 8 – Erbil***

- The consul-general of Great Britain and the French journalist Hedi Aouidj
- **Louis Sako**, archbishop of Erbil

### ***Sunday, May 10 – Istanbul***

- French and Turkish professors at the **Institut français d'études anatoliennes** and **Galatasaray University**
- Professor **Alexandre Toumarkine**, Institut français d'études anatoliennes

### ***Monday, May 11 – Ankara***

- **Mr. Bernard Emié**, ambassador of France in Turkey, and department heads
- **Mr. Şükrü Elekdağ**, vice-president of the France-Turkey friendship group in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey
- **Mr. Douglas Silliman**, interim American chargé d'affaires
- **Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan**, undersecretary of State for foreign affairs
- **Mr. Abdullah Gül**, President of the Republic of Turkey

### ***Tuesday, May 12 – Istanbul***

- **Mr. Murat Özçelik**, special representative for Iraq
- **Mr. Tahsin Burcuoğlu**, secretary-general of the National Security Council

## VIII – TRIPS TO THE UNITED STATES

### *Thursday, May 19 - Washington*

- **Mr. Pierre Vimont**, ambassador of France in the United States, and the department heads
- **Mr. Dennis Ross**, special advisor to the secretary of State for the Gulf and southwest Asia
- **Mr. John Kerry**, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee
- **Mr. Jeffrey Feltman**, principal deputy assistant secretary of State for the Near East
- **Mr. David Makovsky**, senior fellow and director of the Washington Institute's Project on the Middle East Peace Process
- **Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski**, former national security advisor to President Jimmy Carter
- **Mr. Meaghen McDermott**, National Security Council director for Syria, Lebanon and North Africa
- **AIPAC** (American-Israel Public Affairs Committee):
  - **Dr. Marvin Feuer** and **Ambassador Brad Gordon**, co-directors,
  - **Ms. Ester Kurz**, director of legislative strategy, **Ms. Leah Odinec**, **Mr. Raphael Danziger**
- **Ms. Marina Ottaway**, director of the Carnegie Foundation's Middle East program

### *Wednesday, May 20*

- **General Brent Scowcroft** (The Scowcroft Group)

### *Thursday, May 21 – New York*

- **American Jewish Committee**:
  - **Mr. Aaron Jacob**, associate director for international affairs
  - **Ms. Linda Senat**, director of international relations
- **Mr. Abraham Foxman**, national director of the Anti-Defamation League
- **Mr. Terje Roed Larsen**, United Nations special coordinator for the Middle East peace process
- **Mr. Malcolm Hoenlein**, executive vice-chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

## **IX- TRIPS TO BRUSSELS**

### ***Wednesday, June 17***

- **Mr. Javier Solana**, secretary-general of the Council of the European Union, high representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)
- **Mr. Eneko Landaburu**, director-general of the European Commission DG for External Relations
- **Mr. Marc Otte**, European Union special representative for the Middle East peace process
- **Mr. Philippe Etienne**, permanent representative of France to the European Union

## **APPENDIX 2 - Hamas Charter (1988)**

### **The Charter of Allah: The Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)**

“In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah. And if the People of the Scripture had believed, it had been better for them. Some of them are believers; but most of them are evil-doers. They will not harm you save a trifling hurt, and if they fight against you they will turn and flee. And afterward they will not be helped. Ignominy shall be their portion wheresoever they are found save [where they grasp] a rope from Allah and a rope from man. They have incurred anger from their Lord, and wretchedness is laid upon them. That is because they used to disbelieve the revelations of Allah, and slew the Prophets wrongfully. That is because they were rebellious and used to transgress.” Surat Al-Imran (III), verses 109-111 Israel will rise and will remain erect until Islam eliminates it as it had eliminated its predecessors. The Islamic World is burning. It is incumbent upon each one of us to pour some water, little as it may be, with a view of extinguishing as much of the fire as he can, without awaiting action by the others.

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#### **Introduction**

Grace to Allah, whose help we seek, whose forgiveness we beseech, whose guidance we implore and on whom we rely. We pray and bid peace upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, his followers and those who spread his message and followed his tradition; they will last as long as there exist Heaven and Earth. O, people! In the midst of misadventure, from the depth of suffering, from the believing hearts and purified arms; aware of our duty and in response to the decree of Allah, we direct our call, we rally together and join each other. We educate in the path of Allah and we make our firm determination prevail so as to take its proper role in life, to overcome all difficulties and to cross all hurdles. Hence our permanent state of preparedness and our readiness to sacrifice our souls and dearest [possessions] in the path of Allah. Thus, our nucleus has formed which chartered its way in the tempestuous ocean of creeds and hopes, desires and wishes, dangers and difficulties, setbacks and challenges, both internal and external. When the thought matured, the seed grew and the plant took root in the land of reality, detached from temporary emotion and unwelcome haste, the Islamic Resistance Movement erupted in order to play its role in the path of its Lord. In so doing, it joined its hands with those of all Jihad fighters for the purpose of liberating Palestine. The souls of its Jihad fighters will encounter those of all Jihad fighters who have sacrificed their lives in the land of Palestine since it was conquered by the Companion of the Prophet, be Allah’s prayer and peace upon him, and until this very day. This is the Charter of the Islamic Resistance (Hamas) which will reveal its face, unveil its identity, state its position, clarify its purpose, discuss its hopes, call for support to its cause and reinforcement, and for joining its ranks. For our struggle against the Jews is extremely wide-ranging and grave, so much so that it will need all the loyal efforts we can wield, to be followed by further steps and reinforced by successive battalions from the multifarious Arab and Islamic world, until the enemies are defeated and Allah’s victory prevails. Thus we shall perceive them approaching in the horizon, and this will be known before long: “Allah has decreed: Lo! I very shall conquer, I and my messenger, lo! Allah is strong, almighty.”

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## **Part I - Knowing the Movement**

### **Article One: The Ideological Aspects**

The Islamic Resistance Movement draws its guidelines from Islam; derives from it its thinking, interpretations and views about existence, life and humanity; refers back to it for its conduct; and is inspired by it in whatever step it takes.

### **Article Two: The Link between Hamas and the Association of Muslim Brothers**

The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood Movement is a world organization, the largest Islamic Movement in the modern era. It is characterized by a profound understanding, by precise notions and by a complete comprehensiveness of all concepts of Islam in all domains of life: views and beliefs, politics and economics, education and society, jurisprudence and rule, indoctrination and teaching, the arts and publications, the hidden and the evident, and all the other domains of life.

### **Article Three: Structure and Essence**

The basic structure of the Islamic Resistance Movement consists of Muslims who are devoted to Allah and worship Him verily [as it is written]: “I have created Man and Devil for the purpose of their worship” [of Allah]. Those Muslims are cognizant of their duty towards themselves, their families and country and they have been relying on Allah for all that. They have raised the banner of Jihad in the face of the oppressors in order to extricate the country and the people from the [oppressors’] desecration, filth and evil.

### **Article Four**

The Movement welcomes all Muslims who share its beliefs and thinking, commit themselves to its course of action, keep its secrets and aspire to join its ranks in order to carry out their duty. Allah will reward them.

### **Article Five: Dimensions of Time and Space of the Hamas**

As the Movement adopts Islam as its way of life, its time dimension extends back as far as the birth of the Islamic Message and of the Righteous Ancestor. Its ultimate goal is Islam, the Prophet its model, the Qur’an its Constitution. Its special dimension extends wherever on earth there are Muslims, who adopt Islam as their way of life; thus, it penetrates to the deepest reaches of the land and to the highest spheres of Heavens.

### **Article Six: Peculiarity and Independence**

The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinct Palestinian Movement which owes its loyalty to Allah, derives from Islam its way of life and strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine. Only under the shadow of Islam could the members of all regions coexist in safety and security for their lives, properties and rights. In the absence of Islam, conflict arises, oppression reigns, corruption is rampant and struggles and wars prevail. Allah had inspired the Muslim poet, Muhammad Iqbal, when he said:

When the Faith wanes, there is no security  
There is no this-worldliness for those who have no faith  
Those who wish to live their life without religion  
Have made annihilation the equivalent of life.

### **Article Seven: The Universality of Hamas**

By virtue of the distribution of Muslims, who pursue the cause of the Hamas, all over the globe, and strive for its victory, for the reinforcement of its positions and for the encouragement of its Jihad, the Movement is a universal one. It is apt to be that due to the clarity of its thinking, the nobility of its purpose and the loftiness of its objectives. It is in this



light that the Movement has to be regarded, evaluated and acknowledged. Whoever denigrates its worth, or avoids supporting it, or is so blind as to dismiss its role, is challenging Fate itself. Whoever closes his eyes from seeing the facts, whether intentionally or not, will wake up to find himself overtaken by events, and will find no excuses to justify his position. Priority is reserved to the early comers. Oppressing those who are closest to you, is more of an agony to the soul than the impact of an Indian sword. "And unto thee have we revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which has come unto thee. For each we have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had Allah willed, He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which he has given you [He has made you as you are]. So vie with one another in good works. Unto Allah, you will all return. He will then inform you of that wherein you differ." Hamas is one of the links in the Chain of Jihad in the confrontation with the Zionist invasion. It links up with the setting out of the Martyr Izz a-din al-Qassam and his brothers in the Muslim Brotherhood who fought the Holy War in 1936; it further relates to another link of the Palestinian Jihad and the Jihad and efforts of the Muslim Brothers during the 1948 War, and to the Jihad operations of the Muslim Brothers in 1968 and thereafter. But even if the links have become distant from each other, and even if the obstacles erected by those who revolve in the Zionist orbit, aiming at obstructing the road before the Jihad fighters, have rendered the pursuance of Jihad impossible; nevertheless, the Hamas has been looking forward to implement Allah's promise whatever time it might take. The prophet, prayer and peace be upon him, said: The time will not come until Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim! there is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him! This will not apply to the Gharqad, which is a Jewish tree (cited by Bukhari and Muslim).

#### **Article Eight: The Slogan of the Hamas**

Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Qur'an its Constitution, Jihad its path and death for the case of Allah its most sublime belief.

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### **Part II - Objectives**

#### **Article Nine: Motives and Objectives**

Hamas finds itself at a period of time when Islam has waned away from the reality of life. For this reason, the checks and balances have been upset, concepts have become confused, and values have been transformed; evil has prevailed, oppression and obscurity have reigned; cowards have turned tigers, homelands have been usurped, people have been uprooted and are wandering all over the globe. The state of truth has disappeared and was replaced by the state of evil. Nothing has remained in its right place, for when Islam is removed from the scene, everything changes. These are the motives. As to the objectives: discarding the evil, crushing it and defeating it, so that truth may prevail, homelands revert [to their owners], calls for prayer be heard from their mosques, announcing the reinstatement of the Muslim state. Thus, people and things will revert to their true place.

#### **Article Ten**

The Islamic Resistance Movement, while breaking its own path, will do **its** utmost to constitute at the same time a support to the weak, a defense to all the oppressed. It will spare no effort to implement the truth and abolish evil, in speech and in fact, both here and in any other location where it can reach out and exert influence.

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### **Part III - Strategies and Methods**

#### **Article Eleven: The Strategy of Hamas: Palestine is an Islamic Waqf**

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine has been an Islamic Waqf throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection, no one can renounce it or part of it, or abandon it or part of it. No Arab country nor the aggregate of all Arab countries, and no Arab King or President nor all of them in the aggregate, have that right, nor has that right any organization or the aggregate of all organizations, be they Palestinian or Arab, because Palestine is an Islamic Waqf throughout all generations and to the Day of Resurrection. Who can presume to speak for all Islamic Generations to the Day of Resurrection? This is the status [of the land] in Islamic Shari'a, and it is similar to all lands conquered by Islam by force, and made thereby Waqf lands upon their conquest, for all generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. This [norm] has prevailed since the commanders of the Muslim armies completed the conquest of Syria and Iraq, and they asked the Caliph of Muslims, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, for his view of the conquered land, whether it should be partitioned between the troops or left in the possession of its population, or otherwise. Following discussions and consultations between the Caliph of Islam, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, and the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, be peace and prayer upon him, they decided that the land should remain in the hands of its owners to benefit from it and from its wealth; but the control of the land and the land itself ought to be endowed as a Waqf [in perpetuity] for all generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. The ownership of the land by its owners is only one of usufruct, and this Waqf will endure as long as Heaven and earth last. Any demarche in violation of this law of Islam, with regard to Palestine, is baseless and reflects on its perpetrators.

#### **Article Twelve: Hamas in Palestine, Its Views on Homeland and Nationalism**

Hamas regards Nationalism (Wataniyya) as part and parcel of the religious faith. Nothing is loftier or deeper in Nationalism than waging Jihad against the enemy and confronting him when he sets foot on the land of the Muslims. And this becomes an individual duty binding on every Muslim man and woman; a woman must go out and fight the enemy even without her husband's authorization, and a slave without his masters' permission. This [principle] does not exist under any other regime, and it is a truth not to be questioned. While other nationalisms consist of material, human and territorial considerations, the nationality of Hamas also carries, in addition to all those, the all important divine factors which lend to it its spirit and life; so much so that it connects with the origin of the spirit and the source of life and raises in the skies of the Homeland the Banner of the Lord, thus inexorably connecting earth with Heaven. When Moses came and threw his baton, sorcery and sorcerers became futile.

#### **Article Thirteen: Peaceful Solutions, [Peace] Initiatives and International Conferences**

[Peace] initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement. For renouncing any part of Palestine means renouncing part of the religion; the nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its faith, the movement educates its members to adhere to its principles and to raise the banner of Allah over their homeland as they fight their Jihad: "Allah is the all-powerful, but most people are not aware." From time to time a clamoring is voiced, to hold an International Conference in search for a solution to the problem. Some accept the idea, others reject it, for one reason or another, demanding the implementation of this or that condition, as a prerequisite for agreeing to convene the Conference or for participating in it. But the Islamic Resistance Movement, which is aware of the [prospective] parties to this conference, and of their past and present

positions towards the problems of the Muslims, does not believe that those conferences are capable of responding to demands, or of restoring rights or doing justice to the oppressed. Those conferences are no more than a means to appoint the nonbelievers as arbitrators in the lands of Islam. Since when did the Unbelievers do justice to the Believers? “And the Jews will not be pleased with thee, nor will the Christians, till thou follow their creed. Say: Lo! the guidance of Allah [himself] is the Guidance. And if you should follow their desires after the knowledge which has come unto thee, then you would have from Allah no protecting friend nor helper.” Sura 2 (the Cow), verse 120 There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. The initiatives, proposals and International Conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility. The Palestinian people are too noble to have their future, their right and their destiny submitted to a vain game. As the hadith has it: “The people of Syria are Allah’s whip on this land; He takes revenge by their intermediary from whoever he wished among his worshipers. The Hypocrites among them are forbidden from vanquishing the true believers, and they will die in anxiety and sorrow.” (Told by Tabarani, who is traceable in ascending order of traditionaries to Muhammad, and by Ahmed whose chain of transmission is incomplete. But it is bound to be a true hadith, for both story tellers are reliable. Allah knows best.)

#### **Article Fourteen: The Three Circles**

The problem of the liberation of Palestine relates to three circles: the Palestinian, the Arab and the Islamic. Each one of these circles has a role to play in the struggle against Zionism and it has duties to fulfill. It would be an enormous mistake and an abysmal act of ignorance to disregard anyone of these circles. For Palestine is an Islamic land where the First Qibla and the third holiest site are located. That is also the place whence the Prophet, be Allah’s prayer and peace upon him, ascended to heavens. “Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship, the neighborhood whereof we have blessed, that we might show him of our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.” Sura XVII (al-Isra’), verse 1 In consequence of this state of affairs, the liberation of that land is an individual duty binding on all Muslims everywhere. This is the base on which all Muslims have to regard the problem; this has to be understood by all Muslims. When the problem is dealt with on this basis, where the full potential of the three circles is mobilized, then the current circumstances will change and the day of liberation will come closer. “You are more awful as a fear in their bosoms than Allah. That is because they are a folk who understand not.” Sura LIX, (Al-Hashr, the Exile), verse 13.

#### **Article Fifteen: The Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine is an Individual Obligation**

When our enemies usurp some Islamic lands, Jihad becomes a duty binding on all Muslims. In order to face the usurpation of Palestine by the Jews, we have no escape from raising the banner of Jihad. This would require the propagation of Islamic consciousness among the masses on all local, Arab and Islamic levels. We must spread the spirit of Jihad among the [Islamic] Umma, clash with the enemies and join the ranks of the Jihad fighters. The ‘ulama as well as educators and teachers, publicity and media men as well as the masses of the educated, and especially the youth and the elders of the Islamic Movements, must participate in this raising of consciousness. There is no escape from introducing fundamental changes in educational curricula in order to cleanse them from all vestiges of the ideological invasion which has been brought about by orientalist and missionaries. That invasion had begun overtaking this area following the defeat of the Crusader armies by Salah a-Din el Ayyubi. The Crusaders had understood that they had no way to vanquish the Muslims unless they prepared the grounds for that with an ideological invasion which would confuse the thinking of Muslims, revile their heritage, discredit their ideals, to be followed by a military invasion. That was to be in preparation for the Imperialist invasion, as in fact [General] Allenby acknowledged it upon his entry to Jerusalem: “Now, the Crusades are over.” General

Gouraud stood on the tomb of Salah a-Din and declared: "We have returned, O Salah-a-Din!" Imperialism has been instrumental in boosting the ideological invasion and deepening its roots, and it is still pursuing this goal. All this had paved the way to the loss of Palestine. We must imprint on the minds of generations of Muslims that the Palestinian problem is a religious one, to be dealt with on this premise. It includes Islamic holy sites such as the Aqsa Mosque, which is inexorably linked to the Holy Mosque as long as the Heaven and earth will exist, to the journey of the Messenger of Allah, be Allah's peace and blessing upon him, to it, and to his ascension from it. "Dwelling one day in the Path of Allah is better than the entire world and everything that exists in it. The place of the whip of one among you in Paradise is better than the entire world and everything that exists in it. [God's] worshiper's going and coming in the Path of Allah is better than the entire world and everything that exists in it." (Told by Bukhari, Muslim Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja) I swear by that who holds in His Hands the Soul of Muhammad! I indeed wish to go to war for the sake of Allah! I will assault and kill, assault and kill, assault and kill (told by Bukhari and Muslim).

### **Article Sixteen**

We must accord the Islamic [young] generations in our area, an Islamic education based on the implementation of religious precepts, on the conscientious study of the Book of Allah; on the Study of the Prophetic Tradition, on the study of Islamic history and heritage from its reliable sources, under the guidance of experts and scientists, and on singling out the paths which constitute for the Muslims sound concepts of thinking and faith. It is also necessary to study conscientiously the enemy and its material and human potential; to detect its weak and strong spots, and to recognize the powers that support it and stand by it. At the same time, we must be aware of current events, follow the news and study the analyses and commentaries on it, together with drawing plans for the present and the future and examining every phenomenon, so that every Muslim, fighting Jihad, could live out his era aware of his objective, his goals, his way and the things happening round him. "O my dear son! Lo! though it be but the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and though it be in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Lo! Allah is subtle. Aware. O my dear son! Establish worship and enjoin kindness and forbid inequity, and persevere, whatever may befall thee. Lo! that is of the steadfast heart of things. Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk, nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! Allah loves not braggarts and boasters." Sura XXXI (Luqman), verses 16-18

### **Article Seventeen: The Role of Muslim Women**

The Muslim women have a no lesser role than that of men in the war of liberation; they manufacture men and play a great role in guiding and educating the [new] generation. The enemies have understood that role, therefore they realize that if they can guide and educate [the Muslim women] in a way that would distance them from Islam, they would have won that war. Therefore, you can see them making consistent efforts [in that direction] by way of publicity and movies, curricula of education and culture, using as their intermediaries their craftsmen who are part of the various Zionist Organizations which take on all sorts of names and shapes such as: the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, gangs of spies and the like. All of them are nests of saboteurs and sabotage. Those Zionist organizations control vast material resources, which enable them to fulfill their mission amidst societies, with a view of implementing Zionist goals and sowing the concepts that can be of use to the enemy. Those organizations operate [in a situation] where Islam is absent from the arena and alienated from its people. Thus, the Muslims must fulfill their duty in confronting the schemes of those saboteurs. When Islam will retake possession of [the means to] guide the life [of the Muslims], it will wipe out those organizations which are the enemy of humanity and Islam.

### **Article Eighteen**

The women in the house and the family of Jihad fighters, whether they are mothers or sisters, carry out the most important duty of caring for the home and raising the children upon the moral concepts and values which derive from Islam; and of educating their sons to observe the religious injunctions in preparation for the duty of Jihad awaiting them. Therefore, we must pay attention to the schools and curricula upon which Muslim girls are educated, so as to make them righteous mothers, who are conscious of their duties in the war of liberation. They must be fully capable of being aware and of grasping the ways to manage their households. Economy and avoiding waste in household expenditures are prerequisites to our ability to pursue our cause in the difficult circumstances surrounding us. Therefore let them remember at all times that money saved is equivalent to blood, which must be made to run in the veins in order to ensure the continuity of life of our young and old. "Lo, men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard [their modesty], and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward." Sura 33 (Al-Ahzab, the Clans), verse 35.

### **Article Nineteen: The Role of Islamic Art in the War of Liberation**

Art has rules and criteria by which one can know whether it is Islamic or Jahiliyya art. The problems of Islamic liberation underlie the need for Islamic art which could lift the spirit, and instead of making one party triumph over the other, would lift up all parties in harmony and balance. Man is a strange and miraculous being, made out of a handful of clay and a breath of soul; Islamic art is to address man on this basis, while Jahili art addresses the body and makes the element of clay paramount. So, books, articles, publications, religious exhortations, epistles, songs, poems, hymns, plays, and the like, if they possess the characteristics of Islamic art, have the requisites of ideological mobilization, of a continuous nurturing in the pursuance of the journey, and of relaxing the soul. The road is long and the suffering is great and the spirits are weary; it is Islamic art which renews the activity, revives the movement and arouses lofty concepts and sound planning. The soul cannot thrive, unless it knows how to contrive, unless it can transit from one situation to another. All this is a serious matter, no jesting. For the umma fighting its Jihad knows no jesting.

### **Article Twenty: Social Solidarity**

Islamic society is one of solidarity. The Messenger of Allah, be Allah's prayer and peace upon him, said: What a wonderful tribe were the Ash'aris! When they were overtaxed, either in their location or during their journeys, they would collect all their possessions, and then would divide them equally among themselves. This is the Islamic spirit which ought to prevail in any Muslim society. A society which confronts a vicious, Nazi-like enemy, who does not differentiate between man and woman, elder and young ought to be the first to adorn itself with this Islamic spirit. Our enemy pursues the style of collective punishment of usurping people's countries and properties, of pursuing them into their exiles and places of assembly. It has resorted to breaking bones, opening fire on women and children and the old, with or without reason, and to setting up detention camps where thousands upon thousands are interned in inhuman conditions. In addition, it destroys houses, renders children orphans and issues oppressive judgements against thousands of young people who spend the best years of their youth in the darkness of prisons. The Nazism of the Jews does not skip women and children, it scares everyone. They make war against people's livelihood, plunder their moneys and threaten their honor. In their horrible actions they mistreat people like the most

horrendous war criminals. Exiling people from their country is another way of killing them. As we face this misconduct, we have no escape from establishing social solidarity among the people, from confronting the enemy as one solid body, so that if one organ is hurt the rest of the body will respond with alertness and fervor.

#### **Article Twenty-One**

Social solidarity consists of extending help to all the needy, both materially and morally, or assisting in the execution of certain actions. It is incumbent upon the members of the Hamas to look after the interests of the masses the way they would look after their own interests. They must spare no effort in the implementation and maintenance of those interests, and they must avoid playing with anything that might effect the future generations or cause damage to their society. For the masses are of them and for them, their strength is [ultimately] theirs and their future is theirs. The members of Hamas must share with the people its joys and sorrows, and adopt the demands of the people and anything likely to fulfill its interests and theirs. When this spirit reigns, congeniality will deepen, cooperation and compassion will prevail, unity will firm up, and the ranks will be strengthened in the confrontation with the enemy.

#### **Article Twenty-Two: The Powers which Support the Enemy**

The enemies have been scheming for a long time, and they have consolidated their schemes, in order to achieve what they have achieved. They took advantage of key elements in unfolding events, and accumulated a huge and influential material wealth which they put to the service of implementing their dream. This wealth [permitted them to] take over control of the world media such as news agencies, the press, publication houses, broadcasting and the like. [They also used this] wealth to stir revolutions in various parts of the globe in order to fulfill their interests and pick the fruits. They stood behind the French and the Communist Revolutions and behind most of the revolutions we hear about here and there. They also used the money to establish clandestine organizations which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies and carry out Zionist interests. Such organizations are: the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, B'nai B'rith and the like. All of them are destructive spying organizations. They also used the money to take over control of the Imperialist states and made them colonize many countries in order to exploit the wealth of those countries and spread their corruption therein. As regards local and world wars, it has come to pass and no one objects, that they stood behind World War I, so as to wipe out the Islamic Caliphate. They collected material gains and took control of many sources of wealth. They obtained the Balfour Declaration and established the League of Nations in order to rule the world by means of that organization. They also stood behind World War II, where they collected immense benefits from trading with war materials and prepared for the establishment of their state. They inspired the establishment of the United Nations and the Security Council to replace the League of Nations, in order to rule the world by their intermediary. There was no war that broke out anywhere without their fingerprints on it: "...As often as they light a fire for war, Allah extinguishes it. Their efforts are for corruption in the land and Allah loves not corrupters." Sura V (Al-Ma'ida—the Tablespread), verse 64 The forces of Imperialism in both the Capitalist West and the Communist East support the enemy with all their might, in material and human terms, taking turns between themselves. When Islam appears, all the forces of Unbelief unite to confront it, because the Community of Unbelief is one. "Oh ye who believe! Take not for intimates others than your own folk, who would spare no pain to ruin you. Hatred is revealed by [the utterance of] their mouth, but that which their breasts hide is greater. We have made plain for you the revelations if you will understand." Sura III, (Al-Imran), verse 118 It is not in vain that the verse ends with God's saying: "If you will understand."

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## Part IV

### **Article Twenty-Three: Our Position Vis-a-Vis the Islamic Movements**

The Hamas views the other Islamic movements with respect and appreciation. Even when it differs from them in one aspect or another or on one concept or another, it agrees with them in other aspects and concepts. It reads those movements as included in the framework of striving [for the sake of Allah], as long as they hold sound intentions and abide by their devotion to Allah, and as long as their conduct remains within the perimeter of the Islamic circle. All the fighters of Jihad have their reward. The Hamas regards those movements as its stock holders and asks Allah for guidance and integrity of conduct for all. It shall not fail to continue to raise the banner of unity and to exert efforts in order to implement it, [based] upon the [Holy] Book and the [Prophet's] Tradition. "And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, do not separate. And remember Allah's favor unto you how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations unto you, that happily ye may be guided." Sura III (Al-'Imran), verse 102.

### **Article Twenty-Four**

Hamas will not permit the slandering and defamation of individuals and groups, for the Believers are not slanderers and cursers. However, despite the need to differentiate between that and the positions and modes of conduct adopted by individuals and groups whenever the Hamas detects faulty positions and modes of conduct, it has the right to point to the mistake, to denigrate it, to act for spelling out the truth and for adopting it realistically in the context of a given problem. Wisdom is roaming around, and the Believer ought to grasp it wherever he can find it. "Allah loves not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who has been wronged. Allah is ever Hearer, Knower. If you do good openly or keep it secret, or give evil, lo! Allah is forgiving, powerful." Sura IV (Women), verses 147-148.

### **Article Twenty-Five: The National (wataniyya) Movements in the Palestinian Arena**

[Hamas] reciprocated its respect to them, appreciates their condition and the factors surrounding them and influencing them, and supports them firmly as long as they do not owe their loyalty to the Communist East or to the Crusader West. We reiterate to every one who is part of them or sympathizes with them that the Hamas is a movement of Jihad, or morality and consciousness in its concept of life. It moves forward with the others, abhors opportunism, and only wishes well to individuals and groups. It does not aspire to material gains, or to personal fame, nor does it solicit remuneration from the people. It sets out relying on its own material resources, and what is available to it, [as it is said] "afford them the power you can avail yourself of." [All that] in order to carry out its duty, to gain Allah's favor; it has no ambition other than that. All the nationalist streams, operating in the Palestinian arena for the sake of the liberation of Palestine, may rest assured that they will definitely and resolutely get support and assistance, in speech and in action, at the present and in the future, [because Hamas aspires] to unite, not to divide; to safeguard, not to squander; to bring together, not to fragment. It values every kind word, every devoted effort and every commendable endeavor. It closes the door before marginal quarrels, it does not heed rumors and biased statements, and it is aware of the right of self-defense. Anything that runs counter or contradicts this orientation is trumped up by the enemies or by those who run in their orbit in order to create confusion, to divide our ranks or to divert to marginal things. "O ye who believe! If an evil-liver bring you tidings, verify it, lest ye smite some folk in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did." Sura XLIX (al Hujurat, the Private Apartments), verse 6

### **Article Twenty-Six**

The Hamas, while it views positively the Palestinian National Movements which do not owe their loyalty to the East or to the West, does not refrain from debating unfolding events regarding the Palestinian problem, on the local and international scenes. These debates are realistic and expose the extent to which [these developments] go along with, or contradict, national interests as viewed from the Islamic vantage point.

### **Article Twenty Seven: The Palestine Liberation Organization**

The PLO is among the closest to the Hamas, for it constitutes a father, a brother, a relative, a friend. Can a Muslim turn away from his father, his brother, his relative or his friend? Our homeland is one, our calamity is one, our destiny is one and our enemy is common to both of us. Under the influence of the circumstances which surrounded the founding of the PLO, and the ideological invasion which has swept the Arab world since the rout of the Crusades, and which has been reinforced by Orientalism and the Christian Mission, the PLO has adopted the idea of a Secular State, and so we think of it. Secular thought is diametrically opposed to religious thought. Thought is the basis for positions, for modes of conduct and for resolutions. Therefore, in spite of our appreciation for the PLO and its possible transformation in the future, and despite the fact that we do not denigrate its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, we cannot substitute it for the Islamic nature of Palestine by adopting secular thought. For the Islamic nature of Palestine is part of our religion, and anyone who neglects his religion is bound to lose. "And who forsakes the religion of Abraham, save him who befools himself?" Sura II (Al-Baqra—the Co), verse 130 When the PLO adopts Islam as the guideline for life, then we shall become its soldiers, the fuel of its fire which will burn the enemies. And until that happens, and we pray to Allah that it will happen soon, the position of the Hamas towards the PLO is one of a son towards his father, a brother towards his brother, and a relative towards his relative who suffers the other's pain when a thorn hits him, who supports the other in the confrontation with the enemies and who wishes him divine guidance and integrity of conduct. Your brother, your brother! Whoever has no brother, is like a fighter who runs to the battle without weapons. A cousin for man is like the best wing, and no falcon can take off without wings.

### **Article Twenty-Eight**

The Zionist invasion is a mischievous one. It does not hesitate to take any road, or to pursue all despicable and repulsive means to fulfill its desires. It relies to a great extent, for its meddling and spying activities, on the clandestine organizations which it has established, such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions, and other spying associations. All those secret organizations, some which are overt, act for the interests of Zionism and under its directions, strive to demolish societies, to destroy values, to wreck answerableness, to totter virtues and to wipe out Islam. It stands behind the diffusion of drugs and toxics of all kinds in order to facilitate its control and expansion. The Arab states surrounding Israel are required to open their borders to the Jihad fighters, the sons of the Arab and Islamic peoples, to enable them to play their role and to join their efforts to those of their brothers among the Muslim Brothers in Palestine. The other Arab and Islamic states are required, at the very least, to facilitate the movement of the Jihad fighters from and to them. We cannot fail to remind every Muslim that when the Jews occupied Holy Jerusalem in 1967 and stood at the doorstep of the Blessed Aqsa Mosque, they shouted with joy: "Muhammad is dead, he left daughters behind." Israel, by virtue of its being Jewish and of having a Jewish population, defies Islam and the Muslims. "Let the eyes of the cowards not fall asleep."



### **Article Twenty-Nine: National and Religious Associations, Institutions, the Intelligentsia, and the Arab and Islamic Worlds**

Hamas hopes that those Associations will stand by it on all levels, will support it, adopt its positions, boost its activities and moves and encourage support for it, so as to render the Islamic peoples its backers and helpers, and its strategic depth in all human and material domains as well as in information, in time and space. Among other things, they hold solidarity meetings, issue explanatory publications, supportive articles and tendentious leaflets to make the masses aware of the Palestinian issue, the problems it faces and of the plans to resolve them; and to mobilize the Islamic peoples ideologically, educationally and culturally in order to fulfill their role in the crucial war of liberation, as they had played their role in the defeat of the Crusades and in the rout of the Tartars and had saved human civilization. How all that is dear to Allah! "Allah has decreed: Lo! I verily shall conquer, I and my messengers. Lo! Allah is strong, Almighty." Sura LVIII (Al-Mujadilah), verse 21.

### **Article Thirty**

Men of letters, members of the intelligentsia, media people, preachers, teachers and educators and all different sectors in the Arab and Islamic world, are all called upon to play their role and to carry out their duty in view of the wickedness of the Zionist invasion, of its penetration into many countries, and its control over material means and the media, with all the ramifications thereof in most countries of the world. Jihad means not only carrying arms and denigrating the enemies. Uttering positive words, writing good articles and useful books, and lending support and assistance, all that too is Jihad in the path of Allah, as long as intentions are sincere to make Allah's banner supreme. "Those who prepare for a raid in the path of Allah are considered as if they participated themselves in the raid. Those who successfully rear a raider in their home, are considered as if they participated themselves in the raid." (Told by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

### **Article Thirty-One: The Members of Other Religions The Hamas is a Humane Movement**

Hamas is a humane movement, which cares for human rights and is committed to the tolerance inherent in Islam as regards attitudes towards other religions. It is only hostile to those who are hostile towards it, or stand in its way in order to disturb its moves or to frustrate its efforts. Under the shadow of Islam it is possible for the members of the three religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism to coexist in safety and security. Safety and security can only prevail under the shadow of Islam, and recent and ancient history is the best witness to that effect. The members of other religions must desist from struggling against Islam over sovereignty in this region. For if they were to gain the upper hand, fighting, torture and uprooting would follow; they would be fed up with each other, to say nothing of members of other religions. The past and the present are full of evidence to that effect. "They will not fight you in body safe in fortified villages or from behind wells. Their adversity among themselves is very great. Ye think of them as a whole whereas their hearts are diverse. That is because they are a folk who have no sense." Sura 59 (al-Hashr, the Exile), verse 14 Islam accords his rights to everyone who has rights and averts aggression against the rights of others. The Nazi Zionist practices against our people will not last the lifetime of their invasion, for "states built upon oppression last only one hour, states based upon justice will last until the hour of Resurrection." "Allah forbids you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your houses, that you should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loves the just dealers." Sura 60 (Al-Mumtahana), verse 8.

### **Article Thirty-Two: The Attempts to Isolate the Palestinian People**

World Zionism and Imperialist forces have been attempting, with smart moves and considered planning, to push the Arab countries, one after another, out of the circle of conflict with Zionism, in order, ultimately, to isolate the Palestinian People. Egypt has already been cast out of the conflict, to a very great extent through the treacherous Camp David Accords, and she has been trying to drag other countries into similar agreements in order to push them out of the circle of conflict. Hamas is calling upon the Arab and Islamic peoples to act seriously and tirelessly in order to frustrate that dreadful scheme and to make the masses aware of the danger of coping out of the circle of struggle with Zionism. Today it is Palestine and tomorrow it may be another country or other countries. For Zionist scheming has no end, and after Palestine they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates. Only when they have completed digesting the area on which they will have laid their hand, they will look forward to more expansion, etc. Their scheme has been laid out in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and their present [conduct] is the best proof of what is said there. Leaving the circle of conflict with Israel is a major act of treason and it will bring curse on its perpetrators. “Who so on that day turns his back to them, unless maneuvering for battle or intent to join a company, he truly has incurred wrath from Allah, and his habitation will be hell, a hapless journey’s end.” Sura 8 (al-Anfal—Spoils of War), verse 16 We have no escape from pooling together all the forces and energies to face this despicable Nazi-Tatar invasion. Otherwise we shall witness the loss of [our] countries, the uprooting of their inhabitants, the spreading of corruption on earth and the destruction of all religious values. Let everyone realize that he is accountable to Allah. “Whoever does a speck of good will bear [the consequences] and whoever does a speck of evil will see [the consequences].” Within the circle of the conflict with world Zionism, the Hamas regards itself the spearhead and the avant-garde. It joins its efforts to all those who are active on the Palestinian scene, but more steps need to be taken by the Arab and Islamic peoples and Islamic associations throughout the Arab and Islamic world in order to make possible the next round with the Jews, the merchants of war. “We have cast among them enmity and hatred till the day of Resurrection. As often as they light a fire for war, Allah extinguishes it. Their effort is for corruption in the land, and Allah loves not corrupters.” Sura V (Al-Ma’idah—the Table spread), verse 64.

### **Article Thirty-Three**

The Hamas sets out from these general concepts which are consistent and in accordance with the rules of the universe, and gushes forth in the river of Fate in its confrontation and Jihad waging against the enemies, in defense of the Muslim human being, of Islamic Civilization and of the Islamic Holy Places, primarily the Blessed Aqsa Mosque. This, for the purpose of calling upon the Arab and Islamic peoples as well as their governments, popular and official associations, to fear Allah in their attitude towards and dealings with Hamas, and to be, in accordance with Allah’s will, its supporters and partisans who extend assistance to it and provide it with reinforcement after reinforcement, until the Decree of Allah is fulfilled, the ranks are over-swollen, Jihad fighters join other Jihad fighters, and all this accumulation sets out from everywhere in the Islamic world, obeying the call of duty, and intoning “Come on, join Jihad!” This call will tear apart the clouds in the skies and it will continue to ring until liberation is completed, the invaders are vanquished and Allah’s victory sets in. “Verily Allah helps one who helps Him. Lo! Allah is strong, Almighty.” Sura XXII (Pilgrimage), verse 40.

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## **Part V - The Testimony of History**

### **Article Thirty-Four: Confronting Aggressors Throughout History**

Palestine is the navel of earth, the convergence of continents, the object of greed for the greedy, since the dawn of history. The Prophet, may Allah's prayer and peace be upon him, points out to that fact in his noble hadith in which he implored his venerable Companion, Ma'adh ibn Jabl, saying: "O Ma'adh, Allah is going to grant you victory over Syria after me, from Al-Arish to the Euphrates, while its men, women, and female slaves will be dwelling there until the Day of Resurrection. Those of you who chose [to dwell in one of the plains of Syria or Palestine will be in a state of Jihad to the Day of Resurrection." The greedy have coveted Palestine more than once and they raided it with armies in order to fulfill their covetousness. Multitudes of Crusades descended on it, carrying their faith with them and waving their Cross. They were able to defeat the Muslims for a long time, and the Muslims were not able to redeem it until they sought the protection of their religious banner; then, they unified their forces, sang the praise of their God and set out for Jihad under the Command of Saladin al-Ayyubi, for the duration of nearly two decades, and then the obvious conquest took place when the Crusaders were defeated and Palestine was liberated. "Say (O Muhammad) unto those who disbelieve: ye shall be overcome and gathered unto Hell, an evil resting place." Sura III (Al-Imran), verse 12. This is the only way to liberation, there is no doubt in the testimony of history. That is one of the rules of the universe and one of the laws of existence. Only iron can blunt iron, only the true faith of Islam can vanquish their false and falsified faith. Faith can only be fought by faith. Ultimately, victory is reserved to the truth, and truth is victorious. "And verily Our word went forth of old unto Our Borden sent [to warn]. That they verily would be helped. And that Our host, they verily would be the victors." Sura 38 (Al-saffat), verses 171-3.

### **Article Thirty-Five**

Hamas takes a serious look at the defeat of the Crusades at the hand of Saladin the Ayyubid and the rescue of Palestine from their domination; at the defeat of the Tatars at Ein Jalut where their spine was broken by Qutuz and Al-Dhahir Baibars, and the Arab world was rescued from the sweep of the Tatars which ruined all aspects of human civilization. Hamas has learned from these lessons and examples, that the current Zionist invasion had been preceded by a Crusader invasion from the West; and another one, the Tatars, from the East. And exactly as the Muslims had faced those invasions and planned their removal and defeat, they are able to face the Zionist invasion and defeat it. This will not be difficult for Allah if our intentions are pure and our determination is sincere; if the Muslims draw useful lessons from the experiences of the past, and extricate themselves for the vestiges of the [western] ideological onslaught; and if they follow the traditions of Islam.

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## **Epilogue**

### **Article Thirty-Six: The Hamas are Soldiers**

The Hamas, while breaking its path, reiterates time and again to all members of our people and the Arab and Islamic peoples, that it does not seek fame for itself nor material gains, or social status. Nor is it directed against any one member of our people in order to compete with him or replace him. There is nothing of that at all. It will never set out against any Muslims or against the non-Muslims who make peace with it, here or anywhere else. It will only be of help to all associations and organizations which act

against the Zionist enemy and those who revolve in its orbit. Hamas posits Islam as a way of life, it is its faith and its yardstick for judging. Whoever posits Islam as a way of life, anywhere, and regardless of whether it is an organization, a state, or any other group, Hamas are its soldiers, nothing else. We implore Allah to guide us, to guide through us and to decide between us and our folk with truth. “Our Lord! Decide with truth between us and our folk, for Thou are the best of those who make decisions.” Sura VII (Al-A’raf—the Heights), verse 89. Our last call is: Thanks to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.



**APPENDIX 4 -**

**Interview between the French Senate mission and  
Khaled Meshaal – political leader of Hamas,  
Damascus, January 20, 2009 –**

Khaled Mechaal, January 20, 2009

We appreciate the position of the French people. We hope that the official French position will espouse these popular feelings as well as France's history of resistance (his reference was to the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war).

We are angry at Ban Ki Moon's words in Sharm al-Shaykh. We are angry at the European leaders too. They gave vague promises to the Palestinians and firm commitments to the Israelis.

Now, why did the war start? This was not a war, in the conventional sense; it was a one-sided offensive. Israel expected to respect a cease-fire with no quid pro quo in terms of lifting the siege and opening the crossings. The common view in the street opposes this. This was both an Israeli and an Egyptian mistake. When the cease-fire expired, we received no offer to prolong it, from neither party. Our position was not to renew it without the opening of the borders. Unfortunately, some regional forces gave a cover to this aggression, as if it was in the common interest of these parties, the US and Israel to finish off Hamas. We believe that this collusion aimed at deposing Hamas, as a gift to the incoming administration. The PA in particular had realized it could not depose Hamas through stoking insecurity or imposing the siege, leaving Israeli tanks as its only recourse.

We weren't surprised by the attack in itself. Israel made no secret of it. We were well prepared. Moreover we own the land, and we own a just cause. We were the victimized; we didn't choose this war. Thanks to all this, we stood fast. But obviously we were shocked by the dimensions of the crimes committed by Israel against the civilians. Out of 1300 victims, half were women and children. They destroyed more than 20 mosques, along with schools, hospitals, ambulances, etc. Israeli officials deserve to be subjected to the same kind of justice as in the case of Serbia.

Hamas clearly won this war. We have endured great losses from a humanitarian perspective. But we have lost only 48 fighters from Hamas. Whoever hears these figures can only be surprised. But that's a fact. We didn't enter a conventional war against Israel; this was a guerrilla war. We were well prepared and fighting underground. The Israeli press itself stated Hamas was an army of ghosts. Did Israel capture any soldiers? No. (He also restated the story according to which Hamas captured 3 Israelis, immediately bombarded by Israel to deprive Hamas of a victory). The resistance fought in a legendary

way. Israel fulfilled none of its stated goals: it didn't depose Hamas or weaken the resistance, nor did it stop the rocket fire. Just follow the internal Israeli debate and you will understand who won this war.

The war has led to two major results. All parties, be they regional or international, tried their best to depose Hamas. They tried out all options, and they failed. The first important result is that the way to deal with Hamas should therefore be different, based on respect and recognition for its role and legitimacy. Hamas earned its legitimacy first as a national movement, second through elections and finally by resisting the latest Israeli onslaught. Without this new approach, there will be no peace in the region.

The second lesson is that Israeli simply cannot defeat the Palestinian people. Despite all its might, it cannot impose its conditions upon the Palestinians. Peacemaking will inevitably imply acknowledging the Palestinian national rights. Force is not the way to secure Israel.

Therefore this is the role we expect from Europe. The US failed, and Europe can fill the resulting vacuum and put pressure on the next administration. Europe and the US, all together, can then exert pressure on Israel. Israel must be told: "the only option left to you is peace via recognition of the Palestinian national rights".

*(Responding to a question on the embarrassing silence in the West Bank)*

You're right in being surprised. But this question is for Abu Mazen and Salam Fayadh to answer. They prevented all rallies. They detained 100s of leaders in the West Bank. For the past year and half, there has been a close cooperation between the PA and Israel to strangle the West Bank. It is exhausted. 11 000 prisoners hailing from the West Bank only are held in Israeli jails, and many of them are Hamas leaders and other public figures, that is the elite needed to mobilize the people. This explains the weakness of their stance.

*(On Hizbollah)*

Hizbollah did a good job in terms of public relations. But its military options were limited. International forces are deployed in the South, making it difficult for Hizbollah to open another front.

*(Responding to a remark on the many questions the guests wanted to ask)*

You have a lot of questions, and we have a lot of answers!

*(On the rationale behind the ceasefire and reports of Syrian/Turkish pressure)*

This information is false. Before the assault ended, intense talks were taking place, involving the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Turks, even the French. We sent our delegation out to Cairo as much as four times. Unfortunately, no indirect agreement was reached between Hamas and Israel. Why? The

Egyptians imposed three conditions, although it attributed them to Israel. One was a permanent rather than a temporary ceasefire. They referred to a ceasefire of 10 to 15 years! We refused because this means putting an end to resistance. When Israel withdraws from all occupied territories, gives us our rights and allows the formation of a Palestinian State, then we can talk of a permanent ceasefire. The second condition was a written commitment by Hamas not to smuggle in weapons. We see the issue of weapon smuggling as the responsibility of States, mainly Egypt and Israel; we are a resistance movement. The third condition was that Rafah would be opened on the basis of the 2005 agreement. We reject that. The said agreement expired. It was signed before Hamas took office; there are new realities on the ground in Gaza nowadays. In response, we sent a proposal to the Egyptians stating what four parties may agree upon (Egypt, the Hamas government, the Palestinian presidency and European monitors). Egypt rejected the proposal, because it refuses to give Hamas any role at the crossing.

Basically, the Egyptian attitude toward Hamas just adds to the Israeli aggression.

Egypt was pressurizing us in Cairo; Israel was pressurizing us, militarily, in Gaza. When things stalled in Cairo, Israel intensified the pressure in Gaza. As a result, there really was no need for Syrian or Turkish pressure.

*(Responding to a question on what Hamas would do if the Israelis didn't withdraw in due time).*

They are out already. They started this morning and have completed the withdrawal. They had no other option.

*(Responding to a question on what would happen if the blockade remained and the crossing didn't open)*

During the war we expressed four demands: 1. Ceasefire; 2. Withdrawal; 3. Lifting the siege; 4. Opening the crossings. We fulfilled two objectives. Remain two. In that sense, we are still in this war. I think that the world heard the message that the siege led to the war, and must now be lifted. Otherwise, we the Palestinian people retain our options, and no stabilisation will occur in the region.

All Arab channels state that the people in Gaza blame Israel above all, then the Arabs, and finally the international community.

*(Responding to a question on what Kuwait changes)*

We were all surprised by King Abdallah's speech. We welcomed it and I called Saud al-Faysal and Migrin Ibn Abdul Aziz to express our appreciation. Yesterday, yes there was some degree of reconciliation. But from what I hear today, this reconciliation doesn't reflect in the different parties' respective positions. The final statement avoided touching upon the contentious issues. Some leaders didn't even attend the final meeting.



*(Responding to a question on who might be a good partner in terms of Palestinian reconciliation).*

Those who take decisions within Fatah and the PLO are those pushing a bad agenda. We see the PLO as having been in collusion with Israel during this war. Their attitudes may change. But the key is to respect Hamas as a central player in the Palestinian arena, and abide by the rules of Palestinian democracy.

*(On the gift their charter and rejection of Israel offers their detractors).*

This is a good question, and I will give you a good answer. One way of putting the debate is “what did Mahmud Abbas or Yasser Arafat before him gain from recognising Israel and renouncing the equivalent of the charter? Nothing. The Arabs took a generous initiative in 2002. Did Israel respond? No. Another way of putting the debate is the following: Hamas itself made a generous proposal in 2006, when we achieved a consensus among Palestinian factions toward achieving reconciliation. The document mentioned that we accept Israel within the border of 1967, obviously as long as Palestinian national rights are recognised and that Palestinians enjoy real sovereignty. This was endorsed by all, and represented a new position for Hamas. Recognition of Israel, therefore, is not the problem. Besides, it is wrong to ask those living in the jail of occupation to recognise the jailer. The solution is to empower the Palestinians to set up their State and then request that State to recognise Israel.

*(Responding to a question on the role to be expected from the French and Europeans)*

Israel is like an individual that is used to obtain by force what it wants from another individual. This can change only if the latter stands up to the former, or if a third party intervenes. Because of the Arab and Palestinian weakness, and because the US has not assumed its role, this is not happening.

We believe in a possible European role, because Europeans have a better understanding of the causes behind this conflict; because the failed US policies create a vacuum that needs to be filled; and because of the latest Israeli failure in using force and force only. France along with other Europeans may help reframe Western policies toward the region. For the past 20 years, the US has pursued peace in a particular way, and it failed; continuing the same failed policy will lead to the same results.

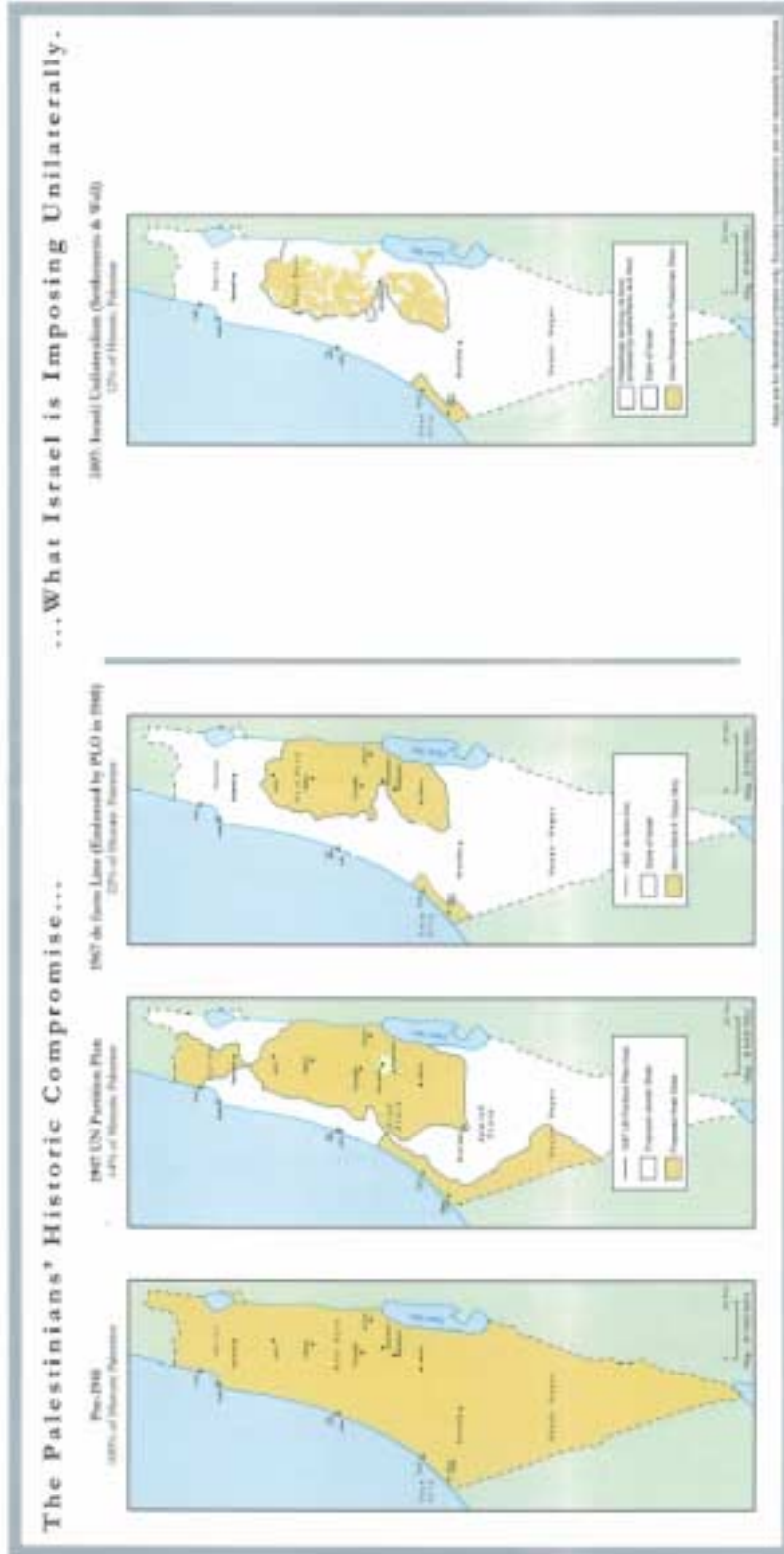
*(Responding to a question on whether the framework negotiated at the end of the Clinton era, and which appears to all as the only practical way to resolve this conflict, is acceptable to Hamas)*

No. And it is not only unacceptable to Hamas. It is to Fatah too. This framework disregards the Palestinian national rights. Let me put it this way. The frame of reference in those negotiations was the international resolutions related to the conflict. Now when one negotiates on the basis of such a frame

of reference, why try to manipulate or transform it? The day you accept to disparage the frame of reference, you open the door to all kinds of problems, simply because Israel is the strongest party. You end up with land swaps at Israel's discretion, an intractable situation in Jerusalem, ideas such as distinguishing who has sovereignty below and above earth near the Dome of the Rock. In practice, there is no fixed frame of reference, and because of this it is up to the strongest party to impose its terms. Israel will never give anything up unless it comes under pressure, either by the international community, or from Hamas.

## APPENDIX 5 – The Partition of Palestine

### Shrinking Palestine



Source:  
Palestinian  
Authority

## APPENDIX 6 - What is left of the West Bank



Map by Julien Bousac, Atlas du Monde diplomatique  
"Un monde à l'envers", Paris, 2009 ©®.

## APPENDIX 7 -

### Israel's political system and declaration of independence

The State of Israel does not have a formal constitution. In 1948, despite the declaration of independence on May 14, 1948 (see below), which said "a Constitution... shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the October 1, 1948", disagreements between religious and secular leaders prevented the drafting of a single constitutional text. Some religious Jews objected to the idea of a document that would place the State's authority above that of religious texts such as the Torah.

The Provisional Council of State declared the creation of the State of Israel in the Tel Aviv Museum at four-thirty in the afternoon of May 14, 1948. It was read by David Ben Gurion and signed by the Council's 37 members. This is the text:

"ERETZ-ISRAEL (the Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma'pilim [(Hebrew) - immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

This right was recognized in the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and re-affirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations.

Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland.

In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom- and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

Accordingly we, members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish Community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.

We declare that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (May 15, 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called 'Israel'.

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The State of Israel is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the resolution of the General Assembly of the 29th November, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the comity of nations.

We appeal, in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months, to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.

Placing our trust in the "Rock of Israel", we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the Provisional Council of State on the soil of the homeland in the city of Tel Aviv on this Sabbath Eve, the 5th day of Iyar, 5708 (May 14, 1948)."

On June 13, 1950, the first elected assembly, the Knesset, found a compromise by asking its Constitution, Law and Justice Committee to draft a constitution one chapter at a time, each entering into force with the value of fundamental law. In the end they would be assembled into a constitution after the latter was adopted.

Between 1958 and 1988 Israel adopted nine fundamental laws on the organization of political institutions. In 1992 the Knesset adopted the first two relating to fundamental rights, allowing the Supreme Court to declare its competence in constitutional matters.

The Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee resumed the task of drafting a full constitution. On February 13, 2006 it presented a set of proposals that could help bring an end to the system of fundamental laws. The leaders of the three main political parties—Ehud Olmert for Kadima, Amir Peretz for Labour and Benjamin Netanyahu for Likud—accepted the task and said that a plenary session of the 17<sup>th</sup> Knesset should examine the full draft text.

**APPENDIX 8 -  
The Palestinian National Reconciliation Document**

**In the name of God, the Compassionate and the Merciful,**

***'Abide by the decree of God and never  
disperse' (a verse from the Holy Quran)***

Based on the high sense of national and historical responsibility and due to the dangers facing our people and for the sake of reinforcing and consolidating the Palestinian internal front and protection of national unity and the unity of our people in the homeland and in the Diaspora, and in order to confront the Israeli scheme that aims to impose the Israeli solution which blows up the dream of our people and the right of our people in establishing their independent Palestinian state with full sovereignty; this scheme that the Israeli government intends to implement in the next phase as establishment of the erection and completion of the apartheid wall and the Judaization of Jerusalem and the expansion of the Israeli settlements and the seizure of the Jordan Valley and the annexation of vast areas of the West Bank and blocking the path in front of our people to exercise their right of return.

In order to maintain the accomplishments of our people achieved in long struggle path and in loyalty to the martyrs of our great people and the pains of their prisoners and the agony of their injured, and based on the fact that we are still passing through a liberation phase with nationalism and democracy as the basic features, and this imposes a political struggle strategy that meets with these features and in order to make the Palestinian comprehensive national dialogue succeed, and based on the Cairo Declaration and the urgent need for unity and solidarity, we present this document (the national conciliation document) to our great steadfast people and to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and to the PLO Leadership and



to the PM Ismail Hanieh and to the Council of Ministers and to the Speaker of the PNC and to the members of the PNC and to the Speaker and members of the PLC and to all Palestinian forces and factions and to all nongovernmental and popular organizations and institutions and to leadership of Palestinian public opinion in the homeland and in the Diaspora.

Hoping to consider this document as one whole package and with the hope to see this document get the support and approval of everybody and that it can contribute to reach a Palestinian national conciliation document.

1. The Palestinian people in the homeland and in the Diaspora seek to liberate their land and to achieve their right in freedom, return and independence and to exercise their right in self determination, including the right to establish their independent state with al-Quds al-Shareef [Jerusalem] as its capital on all territories occupied in 1967 and to secure the right of return for the refugees and to liberate all prisoners and detainees based on the historical right of our people on the land of the fathers and grandfathers and based on the UN Charter and the international law and international legitimacy.
2. To work quickly on achieving what has been agreed upon in Cairo in March 2005 pertaining to the development and activation of the PLO and the joining of Hamas and Islamic Jihad Movements to the PLO which is the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people wherever they are located and in a manner that meets with changes on the Palestinian arena according to democratic principles and to consolidate the fact that the PLO is the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people in a manner that reinforces the capacity of the PLO to assume its responsibilities in leading our people in the homeland and in the Diaspora and in mobilizing the people and in defending their national, political and humanitarian rights in the various fora and circles and in the

international and regional arenas and based on the fact that the national interest stipulates the formation of a new Palestinian National Council before the end of 2006 in a manner that secures the representation of all Palestinian national and Islamic forces, factions and parties and all concentrations of our people everywhere and the various sectors and the figures on proportional basis in representation and presence and struggle and political, social and popular effectiveness and to maintain the PLO as a broad front and framework and a comprehensive national coalition and a gathering framework for all the Palestinians in the homeland and in the Diaspora and to be the higher political reference.

3. The right of the Palestinian people in resistance and clinging to the option of resistance with the various means and focusing the resistance in the occupied territories of 1967 alongside with the political action and negotiations and diplomatic action and continuation of popular and mass resistance against the occupation in its various forms and policies and making sure there is broad participation by all sectors and masses in the popular resistance.
4. To set up a Palestinian plan towards comprehensive political action and to unify the Palestinian political rhetoric on the basis of the Palestinian national consensus program and Arab legitimacy and the international legitimacy resolutions that grant justice to the Palestinian people who are represented by the PLO and the PNA as president and government, and the national and Islamic factions and the civil society organizations and the public figures in order to mobilize Arab, Islamic and international political and financial and economic and humanitarian support and solidarity to our people and to our PNA and to support the right of our people in self determination and freedom and return and independence and to confront the plan of Israel in imposing the Israeli solution on our people and to confront the oppressive siege on the Palestinian people.

5. To protect and reinforce the PNA since it is the nucleus of the future state; this PNA which was established by the struggle and sacrifices, blood and pain of the Palestinian people and to stress on the fact the higher national interests stipulates respecting the temporary constitution of the PNA and the effective laws and respecting the responsibilities and authorities of the president elected according to the will of the Palestinian people through free, honest and democratic elections and to respect the responsibilities and authorities of the government that was granted the confidence vote by the PLC, and the importance and the need for creative cooperation between the presidency and the government and joint work and hold regular meetings between them to settle any disputes that might arise through brotherly dialogue based on the temporary constitution and for the sake of the higher interests and the need to hold a comprehensive reform in the PNA institutions, especially the judicial apparatus and the respect of the judiciary authority at all levels and to implement its decisions and to reinforce the rule of the law.
6. To form a national unity government on a basis that secures the participation of all parliament blocs, especially Fatah and Hamas and the political forces that desire to participate on the basis of this document and the joint program to upgrade the Palestinian situation at the local, Arab, regional and international levels and to confront the challenges through having a strong national government that enjoys Palestinian popular and political support from all forces and to present the best possible care for the sectors that carried the burden of steadfastness and resistance and the Intifada and who were the victims of the Israeli criminal aggression, especially the families of the martyrs, prisoners and injured and the owners of the demolished homes and properties which were destroyed by the occupation, in addition to the care to the unemployed and the graduates.

7. Administration of the negotiations is the jurisdiction of the PLO and the President of the PNA on the basis of clinging to the Palestinian national goals and to achieve these goals on condition that any final agreement must be presented to the new PNC for ratification or to hold a general referendum wherever it is possible.
8. To liberate the prisoners and detainees is a sacred national duty that must be assumed by all Palestinian national and Islamic forces and factions and the PLO and the PNA as President and government and the PLC and all resistance forces.
9. The need to double efforts to support and care for the refugees and defend their rights and work on holding a popular conference representing the refugees which should come up with commissions to follow up its duties and to stress on the right of return and to cling to this right and to call on the international community to implement Resolution 194 which stipulates the right of the refugees to return and to be compensated.
10. To work on forming a unified resistance front under the name 'Palestinian resistance front' to lead and engage in resistance against the occupation and to unify and coordinate action and resistance and to form a unified political reference for the front.
11. To cling to the democratic trend and to hold regular general free and honest and democratic elections according to the law for the president and the PLC and the local and municipal councils and to respect the principle of peaceful and smooth transfer of authority and to promise to protect the Palestinian democratic experience and respect the democratic choice and its results and respect the rule of the law and the public and basic freedoms and freedom of the press and equality among the citizens in rights and duties without any discrimination and to protect the achievements of women and develop and reinforce them.
12. To reject and denounce the oppressive siege against the Palestinian people which is being led by the US and Israel

and call on the Arabs at the popular and official levels to support the Palestinian people and the PLO and the PNA and to call on the Arab governments to implement the political, financial, economic, and media decisions of the Arab summits that support the Palestinian people and their steadfastness and their national cause and to stress that the PNA is committed to the Arab consensus and to joint Arab action.

13. To call on the Palestinian people for unity and solidarity and unifying the ranks and support the PLO and the PNA as president and government and to reinforce steadfastness and resistance in face of the aggression and siege and to reject intervention in the Palestinian internal affairs.
14. To denounce all forms of split that can lead to internal conflicts and to condemn the use of weapons regardless of the reasons in settling internal disputes and to ban the use of weapons among the members of the Palestinian people and to stress on the sanctity of the Palestinian blood and to abide by dialogue as the sole means to solve disagreements and freedom of expression through all media, including the opposition to the authority and its decisions on the basis of the law and the right of peaceful protest and to organize marches and demonstrations and sit ins on condition that they be peaceful and without any arms and not to attack the properties of citizens and public property.
15. The national interest stipulates the need to look for the best means towards the continuation of participation of the Palestinian people and their political forces in the Gaza Strip in their new situation in the battle for freedom, return and independence and to liberate the West Bank and Jerusalem in a manner that makes the steadfast Gaza Strip a real support force to steadfastness and resistance of our people in the West Bank and Jerusalem as the national interest stipulates reassessing the struggle methods to seek the best methods to resist occupation.
16. The need to reform the develop the Palestinian security institution with all its branches on a modern basis and in a

manner that makes them capable of assuming their tasks in defending the homeland and the citizens and in confronting the aggression and the occupation and to maintain security and public order and implement the laws and end the state of chaos and security chaos and end the forms of public armed presence and parades and confiscation of the chaotic weapons that harm the resistance and distort its image and that threaten the unity of the Palestinian society and the need to coordinate and organize the relation with the forces of resistance and organize and protect their weapons.

17. To call on the PLC to continue to issue laws that organize the work of the security institution and apparatuses with their various branches and work on issuing a law that bans exercise of political and partisan action by the members of the security services and to abide by the elected political reference as defined by the law.
18. To work on expanding the role and presence of the international solidarity committees and the peace loving groups that support our people in their just struggle against the occupation, settlements, the apartheid wall politically and locally and to work towards the implementation of the International Court of Justice decision at The Hague pertaining to the removal of the wall and settlements and their illegitimate presence.

**Signed by:**

Fatah: PLC member **Marwan Barghouti**, Fatah Secretary.

Hamass: Sheikh **Abdul Khaleq al-Natsheh**, Higher Leading Commission

Islamic Jihad: **Sheikh Bassam al-Sa'di**

PFLP: **Abdul Rahim Mallouh**, member of PLO Executive Committee and Deputy General Secretary of the PFLP

DFLP: **Mustafa Badarneh**

**APPENDIX 9 –  
Letter from His Exc. Mr. Seyed Mahdi Miraboutalebi, relating to  
Iran's official stance on its nuclear program**

*Au nom de Dieu*

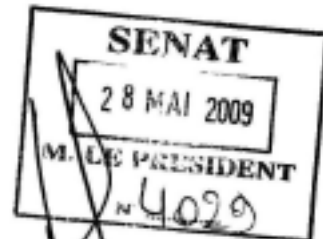


*Ambassade  
de la République Islamique d'Iran*

Réf. : 88/119/2/12290

*L'Ambassadeur*

Paris, le 26 mai 2009



**URGENT**

**Excellence,**

J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser ce courrier suite à notre rendez-vous du 14 avril 2009 qui était l'occasion d'un dialogue fructueux sur les relations entre la République islamique d'IRAN et la France. Je me félicite de l'évolution positive des échanges entre les autorités de nos deux pays dans différents domaines, et vous présente mes salutations les plus sincères à ce sujet.

Par ailleurs, je me permets de vous présenter également mon mécontentement concernant les paroles inexactes prononcées à l'encontre de la République islamique d'IRAN lors la réunion de débat de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées, mercredi le 13 mai 2009.

Dans cette réunion, Monsieur Jean François Poncet, vice-président de ladite commission et son rapporteur sur le Moyen-Orient, a évoqué unilatéralement, lors de la présentation de son rapport sur son voyage récent en Irak, des paroles inexactes à l'encontre de la République islamique d'IRAN. Compte tenu du fait que ces paroles ont été prononcées sans qu'un représentant de la République islamique d'IRAN puisse être présent afin d'exprimer les réelles positions de la politique extérieure de notre pays, je me permets par la présente de vous demander de bien vouloir faire parvenir les points suivants aux sénateurs:

- Dans le rapport de Monsieur Poncet, les activités nucléaires de la République islamique d'IRAN ont été présentées sous le nom du programme nucléaire militaire iranien; cela vient d'un préjugé incorrect concernant la nature pacifiste du programme nucléaire de mon pays. L'attribution de l'adjectif "militaire" à ce programme est entièrement irréaliste et ne représente que les positions personnelles du rapporteur.

*Comme vous le savez, le programme nucléaire iranien est tout à fait transparent, légal et sous la surveillance permanente de l'AIEA. Nous avons, durant les six dernières années, une coopération très proche et positive avec cette dernière. A titre d'exemple, il y a eu plus de 2200 personnel/jour d'inspections par les inspecteurs de l'AIEA sur nos installations nucléaires. D'ailleurs, l'AIEA a, dans tous ses rapports, insisté sur le fait qu'il n'y a pas de dérive dans les activités nucléaires de la République islamique d'IRAN.*

*Vous savez que les armes de destruction massive n'ont jamais leur place dans la politique de défense iranienne. La République islamique d'IRAN a été elle-même une grande victime de ces armes utilisées par Saddam Hussein durant les huit années de la guerre imposée. Compte tenu de nos croyances, nous sommes tout à fait contre de telles armes. Cela fait 37 ans que l'IRAN a signé le TNP et qu'il s'y est adhéré et s'est toujours comporté avec responsabilité concernant ses engagements. Et c'est l'IRAN même qui est l'initiateur d'un Moyen Orient sans armes nucléaires.*

*Il est à noter que la République islamique d'IRAN, avec une population de 73 millions et ses besoins grandissants dans le domaine de l'énergie, s'est fixé l'objectif d'atteindre rapidement la capacité de production de 20 milles méga watts d'électricité nucléaire. Compte tenu du manque de confiance aux pays possédant cette technologie et aussi compte tenu de ses droits inaliénables, l'Iran a décidé de produire lui-même les combustibles nécessaires pour ses utilisations pacifistes dans la production de l'énergie; et toutes ces activités sont sous la surveillance de l'AIEA.*

*Compte tenu de ce que vient d'être dit, ainsi que pour d'autres raisons, j'insiste sur le fait que la question nucléaire est un jeu politique. Avant la Révolution islamique, les Américains avaient une coopération étroite avec l'ancien régime, ils connaissent donc très bien les capacités et les ressources iraniennes.*



*Après la Révolution, lorsque les Américains ont quitté l'IRAN, ils avaient gardé en tête la perspective de leur présence et de leur retour en IRAN. Ainsi, pour empêcher que les partenaires occidentaux puissants tel que la France – capables de les remplacer en IRAN – aient des coopérations avec l'IRAN, ils ont mis en place, et cela d'une façon tout à fait mensongère, ce que nous appelons le jeu nucléaire.*

- *Dans le rapport de Monsieur Poncet à la Commission étrangère du Sénat, l'échec des forces américaines et le caractère erroné du programme de l'attaque des Etats-Unis et ses alliés en Irak est attribué à la République islamique d'IRAN. La France même était parmi les opposants sérieux contre les Etats-Unis lors de l'invasion de l'Irak. De plus, les positions et l'attitude efficace de la République islamique d'IRAN, depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein, montre que, pour aider à instaurer la démocratie en Irak et à l'installation d'un état populaire dans ce pays et l'aider à reconstruire ses infrastructures et se développer, l'Iran a contribué plus que les voisins arabes de l'Irak.*

*Le retrait des forces étrangères et la restitution du pouvoir au gouvernement irakien, la sauvegarde de la totalité territoriale et l'unité du peuple irakien, le retour de stabilité en Irak et le soutien à un état légal et démocratique en Irak sont nos positions nettes et claires. Nous avons des liens culturels, religieux et historiques très proches avec le peuple irakien. Pour nous, la stabilité en Irak est le facteur principal de la sécurité dans la région. Notre regard à la stabilité en Irak et dans la région va dans le même sens que la paix mondiale, et nous croyons à cette approche et nous y sommes fidèles.*

*Un Etat légitime en Irak est capable de gérer le pays dans différents domaines dont celui de la sécurité. Les forces étrangères doivent tenir leurs promesses. La République islamique d'IRAN soutient sans condition l'Etat irakien.*

*La République islamique d'IRAN condamne les actes terroristes en Irak, et insiste sur la nécessité des actions pour mettre fin à ce genre d'opérations terroristes et faire face au terrorisme, qu'importe si ce dernier s'appelle PKK, Pêjak ou le groupe terroriste des Mudjahiddin du Peuple (MKO ou OMPI) ou tout autre groupe.*

*Les actes terroristes en Irak apporteront certainement l'insécurité dans toute la région; il faut donc agir - dans une coopération régionale - pour éradiquer ce problème.*

*L'évolution du terrorisme et la croissance des groupes malfaiteurs sont des menaces issues de l'occupation de l'Irak. Il faudra faire face à ces menaces en contrôlant les frontières et en coupant les ressources financières.*

*D'autre part, en laissant de côté les facteurs économiques, on ne peut pas atteindre la stabilité politique et le développement durable. La présence de tous les pays dans la reconstruction de l'Irak peut aider à instaurer la stabilité politique en Irak. Dans le domaine des relations économiques, la République islamique d'IRAN a réalisé plusieurs actions fondamentales dans les domaines d'électricité, de construction de route et de la santé publique. Il y a également des coopérations entre les deux pays dans les domaines d'environnement, d'agriculture et de lutte contre la désertification.*

*Compte tenu de votre approche positive et constructive, ainsi que votre connaissance sur les réalités et les relations entre les deux pays, j'espère que des mesures seront prises pour que la vérité sur la nature pacifiste du programme nucléaire de la République islamique d'IRAN et les positions de sa politique étrangère envers l'Irak - dont on vient de parler - puissent être notées dans le rapport final de la Commission des Affaires étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces armées du Sénat.*

*Dans le domaine du commerce et la réalisation des projets, les entreprises iraniennes sont très actives, et le terrain est favorable pour une coopération trilatérale entre l'Iran, la France et l'Irak pour contribuer au développement et la reconstruction de l'Irak.*

*J'espère que le texte final de ce rapport contribuera au renforcement de la paix et de la stabilité, ainsi qu'à la présentation d'une connaissance précise des réalités du Moyen Orient, et le renforcement des relations bilatérales entre la République islamique d'IRAN et la France dans tous les domaines d'intérêts communs.*

*Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Président du Sénat, l'assurance de mes salutations les plus distinguées.*

 **Seyed Mahdi MIRABOUTALEBI**  


**Monsieur Gérard LARCHER**  
**Président du Sénat**