

132nd Bergedorf Round Table

**Stability in the Persian Gulf:
Regional and Transatlantic Perspectives**

Dec. 2nd–4th, 2005, Dubai





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NOTES

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Citizen journalists

British media turns to amateurs and viewers to boost coverage



UAE will hold direct elections

FNC POLLS ONLY THE FIRST STEP IN COUNTRY'S MARCH TOWARDS FULL DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION, SAYS KHALIFA

Abu Dhabi (WAM/President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan said yesterday that the decision to activate the federal National Council through the election of half of its members by local councils in each emirate while appointing the second half is just the first step at what would be a wide-ranging reform policy.

This step, said Sheikh Khalifa, is aimed at widening the participation of the UAE citizens in the public life of the country, and the ultimate aim of sustaining the achievements that the country has made over the last few decades and which will culminate in direct elections.

decisions which was announced on Thursday. Sheikh Khalifa said that the decision stipulates that the half of each of the seven UAE emirates will form a local council which is to be at least 100 times as much as the number of its representatives in the FNC.

That means by each FNC member, a local council in the concerned emirate will have 200 members.

The local council will then conduct a poll to elect half of the representatives of each emirate to the FNC while the Ruler will appoint the other half.

Sheikh Khalifa further announced that he would submit a proposal to the FNC during its next legislative chapter, recommending

"The decision to introduce reforms stems from the conviction of the UAE leadership on the importance of wider participation of citizens."

President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan

THE NUMBERS

Voting representation for each emirate

The FNC has 40 members. The representation of the emirates and consequently the total strength of the local councils are as follows:

Emirate	FNC seats	Local council members
Abu Dhabi	8	800
Dubai	8	800
Sharjah	6	600
Ras Al Khaimah	6	600
Ajman	4	400
Umm Al Qawain	4	400
Fujairah	4	400

amendments in the UAE Constitution.

The prospective constitutional amendments, said Sheikh Khalifa, are aimed at enhancing the role of the FNC and increasing its pow-

ers to comply with the requirements of the next stage. The number of the FNC members should be increased to match with the population increase, he said.

He further added: "We will also ensure that the legislative process of the next council is transparent so that it meets the necessary constitutional measures to hold direct elections."

Sheikh Khalifa stressed that he was looking forward to more reforms on various levels of power.

"The decision to introduce these reforms stems from the firm conviction of the UAE leadership on the importance of achieving wider and more effective participation of the citizens, men and women, in the building and development of the country so as to enhance and protect the gains and achievements of their country," said Sheikh Khalifa.

Exchanging views



Mohammad receives Khalifa

General Sheikh Mohammad bin Fahd Al Saud, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, is seen with the UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan during a meeting in Abu Dhabi.

celebrations

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SUMMARY

How can stability in the Persian Gulf be safeguarded? Participants from the region, the United States, and EU countries analyzed regional prerequisites for reforms, the roles of external actors, and possible ways of engaging Iran in a constructive dialog.

One focus of the discussion was on terminological issues of **democratization** (pp. 43–47). The region’s people certainly long for law-based rule, freedom of expression, and representation. Yet since the term “democracy” already has negative connotations there, should “good governance” become the operative expression instead? Or should the West refuse to make concessions? Some Western speakers were among those favoring an approach that would respect local sensibilities in the use of language and take the whole spectrum of democratic institutions into consideration, instead of reducing “democracy” to just organizing elections.

Does external pressure promote democratization? Participants from the region placed part of the blame for the radicalization of the Islamic world on the continuing Western military presence there (p. 57) and spelled out the negative effects of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (pp. 26–27, 79–80), while Western speakers highlighted the stabilizing effect of Western troops (pp. 83–84). Security considerations alone compel the West to actively work for the region’s modernization on a democratic basis, said European participants. These speakers emphasized Europe was pursuing a longer-term “bottom-up” approach (pp. 29–30) to achieve this goal. On the question of whether the West should support free media and opposition groups in the region, even regional speakers disagreed with each other. While some called for this kind of assistance (p. 76), others criticized the U.S. support for Iranian NGOs as counterproductive because they say it discredits the receivers in the eyes of the government and sections of the population (p. 75).

In analyzing the **role of Iran** the discussion revolved around **Iran’s nuclear program**. Western participants cited extensive evidence suggesting Iran actually harbors covert military ambitions (pp. 81–82). Speakers from Iran responded that Iran is a peaceful country and has not attacked anyone in centuries. Scientists are seeking to complete the nuclear fuel cycle only because the West reneged on its contractual obligations after the Iranian revolution to build reactors and provide nuclear fuel, these speakers said, and concluded that Iran’s legitimate right to complete the nuclear fuel cycle as a pilot project has to be respected. (pp. 88, 92, 94). While some European and American participants argued that having nuclear weapons would actually worsen Iran’s national security, others pointed out that the United States has a less aggressive foreign policy towards nuclear-armed countries such as North Korea and Pakistan than toward Iran (pp. 90-92).

PROTOCOL

Welcome

von Weizsäcker



Let me welcome you to Dubai and thank you for accepting the invitation to the 132nd Bergedorf Round Table, “Stability in the Persian Gulf.” Our topic is a most timely one, not only because of the conflict about the Iranian nuclear program and recent controversial remarks by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The region has also long been considered of central importance to international security in many other respects. Making progress in areas like democracy, human rights, the rule of law and modernization is therefore of the utmost importance not only for the region, but also for the international community.

The Körber Foundation’s Bergedorf Round Table is a private and independent institution, which allows us to speak freely and openly in an atmosphere of absolute confidentiality without having to produce a summit meeting protocol at the end. The reclusive character of this beautiful pavilion on the shores of the Gulf will no doubt foster the analysis of the region’s problems and the development of new approaches. Participants from Iran, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, the US and Europe will contribute their different views to form a comprehensive spectrum of positions on what to do in the Gulf region. As everybody at this table shares the aim of achieving stability, I am confident that everybody is eager to listen and learn from each other. Volker Perthes, Director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and a highly respected authority on the Middle East, will moderate our exchange of thoughts.

The Protocol contains an edited and authorized version of the participants’ oral contributions.



I. A Framework for Political Stability

We will proceed in three sessions. First, we will analyze the political conditions for stability in the Gulf region. Second, we are going to speak about the socioeconomic conditions for reform and third, we will focus on security in the region.

The main questions, not necessarily in this order, are: Is there a relationship between foreign interventions and democracy? Is there a relationship between socioeconomic change and reform? And is there a relationship between democracy and stability? We do not want to search solely for academic answers on what has happened, but also on what we expect from different political actors. My own institute, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in Berlin, was founded to provide scientific advice to the German Bundestag and the government, and I find this practical perspective very useful for focusing our thoughts. I would therefore like you to argue not only from an analytical standpoint, but also be prescriptive. We do not have to agree on definitions and we do not have to come up with a communiqué, even though there are many diplomats at this table, but we should come up with some advice on what should be done in the near future to ensure the democratic and prosperous development for this region.

Ghassan Atiyah, Director of the Iraq Foundation for Development and Democracy in Baghdad and Michael Schaefer, Political Director of the German Foreign Office have kindly agreed to introduce us to our first topic: the conditions and goals of political stability. Let us start with the regional perspective: Mr. Atiyah, a view from Iraq.

The current situation in Iraq is very disappointing, not only to me, who returned there in April 2003 from 20 years in exile, but for most citizens of my country. I would like to point out some historical reasons for the current state of affairs.

The Middle East, especially the countries of the so-called Fertile Crescent—Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon—, has been shaped by outside influences, especially since the end of the First World War. Until the end of the First World War Iraq was not even a nation, but only a geographical term in 1916. The British were given sovereignty over this formerly Turkish territory in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and in 1919 they created the protectorate “Mesopotamia.” As a political entity, Iraq only came into being in 1921 when Emir Faisal was proclaimed King of Iraq by the British. In 1925, the country became a constitutional monarchy. The British were lucky to have King Faisal I because he helped them create something like an Iraqi identity. Iraq became the first independent Arab country and it en-

Perthes

Atiyah

Outside influence has shaped the Middle East since the end of the First World War

The Cold War and Arab nationalism
changed everything

tered the League of Nations in 1932 and became a founding member of the UN and the Arab League. Furthermore, the Iraqi constitution of 1925 was created in a liberal, open-minded spirit and the people became more and more westernized. The integration between Sunnis and Shiites made progress, and more and more Shiites were included in the government. Just to demonstrate how many areas were covered by this attempt to homogenize the nation, King Faisal I even encouraged Iraq's people to wear a common headdress instead of the hitherto existing variety of more than 100 local headdresses.

Outside influence by the British at this time was helpful to Iraq, both in developing a more secular society and in creating a good educational system, infrastructure, and a functioning economy. Both the British and the Iraqis benefited from this development. Furthermore, the Baghdad Pact of Mutual Cooperation between Iraq, Britain, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, created on the initiative of the US and NATO and signed in 1955, served as a framework for regional stability.

Two factors changed the situation in Iraq and in the entire Middle East: the Cold War and the rise of Arab nationalism in the form of Nasserism. After the revolt against the corrupt monarchy in Egypt in 1952 and the rise to power of the officer Gamal Abd El Nasser (Prime Minister in 1954, President in 1956), every young officer in the Middle East dreamed of becoming another Nasser. He seemed to set an example of how to change one's country: through a revolutionary process, not through democratic and free elections. In the Arab World, reforms became associated with dictatorship, not democracy. Furthermore, the Suez Crisis, triggered by Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, marked the beginning of the USSR's increased activities in the Middle East.

In Iraq, the pro-Western monarchy was overthrown in 1958 when King Faisal II was murdered and General Kassem came to power and moved closer to the Soviet Union. This sentence seems odd—it reads like the army/Baath party toppled Kassem in 1963 and the army took power in 1968—but who was in power from 1963–1968? That was the moment of Saddam Hussein. First he created a centralized government, then a dictatorship. As a politician, he was Janus-faced: Vice-president Saddam revived the economy and the educational system, but President Saddam wanted to secure his place in history by seeking a dominant role for Iraq in the region, leading his country first into a war against Iran and then against Kuwait. The opposition in Iraq received no support from Arab countries so it turned to the Americans, even to the Communist Party and also the Shiite Islamists. But America had to choose between reforms and stability and, without doubt, during these years, the



main worry of the West was not the autocratic aspects of Saddam Hussein's regime, but containment of the Soviet Union. Democratization and reforms were neglected for the sake of stability. Opposition to Saddam found no support in the US.

One must take into account this history of external influences and disappointed hopes if one wants to implement democracy today. You have to be very careful as a Westerner because everything you do can have the reverse effect. The decision of the Bush Administration to embrace regime change and foster democratization throughout the Middle East under the assumption that democracies do not wage war against one another was not coherent with previous US policy. Understandably, this makes people in the region suspicious. And the first experiences with democracy in Iraq have not been very encouraging.

Today, there are two approaches toward the Middle East, a European and an American one. The European approach depends on incentives and can be very successful if the incentive is the chance to become an EU member, as you can see in Turkey. Its downside is, many people say, that it lacks teeth. Beyond the promise of membership, it has no effective leverage.

The American version, by contrast, aims at regime change through pressure and, if necessary, through the invasion of a country. The influential group of the so-called neo-cons in Washington wanted to create a new order in the Gulf region to ensure stability and, eventually, democracy. This imperial approach was based on unilateralism and took no care to embed America's policy in an international framework. Only a year ago, in November 2004, the Americans did not give the Arab States any chance to play a role in or even to voice an open opinion on Iraq. They rejected the idea of the Arab League holding a national reconciliation meeting for Iraq. Pax Americana in the American Gulf (instead of the Persian or Arab Gulf) was what they wanted. I think that the Americans planned on achieving democratization in a way similar to what they did in Germany and Japan after 1945. They wanted to change the regime, stabilize the country and then teach the Iraqis how to become democratic.

As we all know, this American approach has not worked out very well thus far.

The invasion and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power was a brilliant military operation, but its general advisability remains questionable and American policies in post-Saddam Iraq have largely been a failure.

As to the idea of toppling Saddam, no American president in his right mind would have undertaken it after weighing the risks and costs against the benefits.

Today, Western influence
is met with mistrust

The EU uses incentives ...

... while the Americans apply pressure



Only a deeply ideologically motivated person like George W. Bush with the support of a group like the neo-cons was capable of taking and implementing that decision.

As far as the policy after the victory over Saddam is concerned, the fundamental problem is that the Americans refused to play the role of facilitators among the Iraqis but decided to become the rulers and in some way tried to make themselves the gods of the country.

The US made countless mistakes in Iraq

The US committed some of its cardinal mistakes in Iraq in blatant contradiction of the policy recommendations the government itself had developed before.

I was a co-chairman of the US State Department's "Future of Iraq" project. For months, more than ten Iraqis of different backgrounds discussed how to ensure stability after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Two of the most important issues were the future of the army and the future of the ruling Baath Party.

As for the army, we strongly recommended not to cut it, but to trim it, because it was always one of the backbones of our national identity. It was established even before the state of Iraq was created.

Baath ideology can be mixed
with everything

As for the Baath party, it should not have been criminalized. It resembled the Communist Party of the Soviet Union rather than the National Socialist Party of the »Third Reich«. When the Soviet Union collapsed, no member of the CPSU was court-martialed, and rightly so. The Baathist ideology itself is neither fascist nor communist. Saddam Hussein used to say, Baath is like tomato juice, you can mix it with anything, especially with pan-Arabic rhetoric, as he frequently did. Both recommendations have, as you know, not been followed—with detrimental consequences.

Instead of promoting democracy, the Americans replaced the people who had fought for democracy.

Furthermore, the Americans divided the Iraqis into victors—Kurds and Shiites—and vanquished—the Sunni. The Sunni were quite willing to cooperate with the Americans after the invasion because they were glad that Saddam was overthrown by the US and not by the Iraqi Shiites. Remember that hardly any Sunni soldiers fought the invaders. But the US missed the chance to take them in from day one.

The invasion has not brought
a better life for Iraqis

The US also missed the opportunity to legitimize their invasion by making life better for the Iraqi people. Unlike the British, who won the respect of the population after the invasion of Mosul in 1918 by immediately caring for the starving,

The crisis in Iraq also represents an opportunity.

Atiyyah

the Americans did not care for and did not create better living conditions. Had American rule meant cleaner water, better food, a secure provision of basic needs for everybody, the attitude in Iraq would be totally different today.

The Americans had a real chance to promote democracy in the Arab world, but, to my mind, they blew it in pretty much every area. In the end, they inadvertently opened the door for Islamist tendencies and for a politicized form of Islam. But once you politicize Islam in an ethnically and religiously divided country like Iraq, you have a perfect recipe for civil war. All the insurgents are now readily wearing the gown of Islam. Elections in a divided country are a dangerous thing, as Angola and Cambodia show us, and the US does not seem capable of preventing the situation from getting out of hand.

Today, Iraq is on the verge of becoming a failed state. The consequences of that would be disastrous, first for Iraq itself where the vacuum would soon be filled by its neighbors, most notably by Iran, which will become for Iraq what Syria became for Lebanon. Moreover, the country will be (fragmented or) split into three territories, defined by ethnic and religious identities. Massoud Barzani, head of the Autonomous Kurdish Government in Northern Iraq, has repeatedly said that in case of chaos or civil war in Iraq, the Kurds will declare their independence. Many Sunni already today propose letting the Shiites go to Iran and aligning themselves with the Arabs.

But failure in Iraq would have grave repercussions not only on region but on the rest of the world, too. The United States might change to an isolationist policy, and if Iraq turns out to be a disaster, nobody in the world will ever again accept lectures about reform or democratization from the West. We all have an interest in bringing the process, which began with the American invasion, to a successful end—even those who opposed the invasion from the beginning.

The US is beginning to learn from this and to realize that it needs help in Iraq. Success in Iraq must be based on regional and international cooperation if it is to be a sustainable peace acceptable to the different actors in this divided country and not only a short period of lesser violence that allows America to pull out. Europe and Russia must have a stake in Iraq, and also Iran and Saudi Arabia as the protectors of the Shia and the Sunni. Only if all these actors work together and contribute their specific expertise and political clout, will we be able to provide real stability and a face-saving formula for the Americans to pull out.

To my mind, the crisis in Iraq also represents an opportunity. New regional frameworks often emerge after big wars. For example, after the Napoleonic Wars,

If Iraq becomes a failed state ...

... that will have grave repercussions on the entire world

America and Europe must work together to stabilize Iraq

the Congress of Vienna established a new order for Europe in 1815 that lasted for several decades. After World War II, countries in Western Europe finally found the necessary strength to embark on the journey towards European integration.

America should try to build a much larger coalition of states to support its efforts to stabilize Iraq. The Europeans, especially Germany, France, and Spain, which have criticized America's strategy, can also play a role as peacekeepers. The cooperation between France and the US in Lebanon, for example, was very successful—together they pressured Syria into accepting expanded investigations into the murder of former Prime Minister Hariri. Paris and Washington co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 1559 that called on Syria to remove its military and intelligence forces from Lebanon—which Syria did in April 2005.

But US-European cooperation, important as it may be, is not enough. I strongly advise the US to also work with Iraq's neighbors, because that is the only way to overcome the anti-American sentiments in the region. The most important of these neighboring countries is of course Iran. Together with the US, Iran is the major player in Iraq. The Iranians already fill the power vacuum in Iraq and the southern part of the country is now almost completely under Iranian influence. As long as the US and Iran, as the two most important external players, do not cooperate on Iraq, I look to the future of my country with concern.

Perthes You have criticized the European approach to the Middle East for its alleged lack of teeth. Fortunately, somebody who doubtlessly does have teeth, Michael Schaefer, is here to tell us more about the chances and the limitations of this approach.

Schaefer I will structure my presentation around four questions posed to me by the organizers: Are external actors serious in their demand for democracy? Is external pressure the right formula for achieving democratization? What are the main obstacles for reforms in the region? And finally: Should the West rather keep out?

As to the first question, are external actors serious in their demand for democracy? Well, the EU, for one, certainly is serious, because democracy in the region is in Europe's strategic interest. It is easy to see that the ongoing crises—the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Syrian-Lebanese crisis—pose immediate and grave threats not only to our energy supply but also to the very stability of Europe.

Europe needs democratic neighbors for security reasons

The European Security Strategy, formulated in 2003 as part of the EU's process of strategic orientation and establishment as a major foreign policy actor, is based



on the concept of comprehensive security. It underlines that the best form of protection for our security is a neighborhood of stable democratic market economies. But how to build these democratic states? Democracy is not only about elections, but about good governance, social and political reforms, and dealing with corruption and the abuse of power. The most important task, though, is building the rule of law. Our experience with recent transformation processes shows that this is the backbone of building a society capable of being an independent actor in international affairs.

Is external pressure the right instrument for achieving democratization? I could simply answer this second question with “no”, hinting to the widespread perception in the region that the US administration’s quest for freedom and democracy is a pretext for imposing American values and securing American interests through regime change. I would like to develop a more nuanced reply, though. I am convinced that neither the representatives of the EU nor those of the US administration want to export a specific Western-style model of democracy when they demand democratization. We strive for a process of modernizing societies, building on the very cultural, religious and historic identity of each country. We believe that the region should not be left alone in its quest for modernization. American, European and other outside actors should help societies to cope with the challenges of globalization and modern development. The problem is that, I must admit, we have yet to work on how to achieve that.

We have made some important first steps, though. The EU’s Barcelona Process aims at encouraging dialog and cooperation among the countries of the Mediterranean region to implement very concrete political projects. The Barcelona Process might not have made as much progress as we would wish since its creation in 1995. But it has established a formal framework that has opened avenues of cooperation in important fields like education.

A second process, the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), was devised one and a half years ago. Drafted in the State Department as an initiative of the American G8 presidency, the concept was changed significantly during the run-up to the G8 summit on Sea Island in June 2004. The final document without doubt bears the imprint of the EU. The American top-down approach was complemented by the European bottom-up approach of taking into account the needs of societies in the region. While the Americans had formulated an agenda for transformation as an *octroi*, the Europeans asked for the priorities of the region itself. To my mind, the BMENA is a convincing synthesis of both ap-

The Barcelona Process was a first step, but much remains to be done



proaches. My assessment of outside pressure would thus be that it can be useful to a certain extent as long as it is embedded in a comprehensive partnership with, and engagement of the societies we want to influence. Changing societies is not a short-term activity, but a distinctively long-term process. This insight, however, is hard to keep up, especially in our political systems in which political actors are evaluated from one legislative period to the next.

The European Union, and Germany in particular, ought to be much more active in Iraq, despite all earlier disagreement with the United States about the justification for invasion. Our common big challenge will be successfully conducting the elections in Iraq to pave the way for the establishment of a functioning democratic system. Iraq needs a commonly accepted constitution. That will only be possible if we find a balance between the Shia majority and Sunni and Kurdish minorities. If we fail to integrate a large part of the Sunnis in the election process, we will be in trouble. Therefore, the majority must offer incentives for the minorities to participate in the democratic process. That is not the easiest thing, as our experience in the Balkans has shown. Training of the Iraqi police alone will not suffice to make the Iraqi political system work. Therefore Germany will participate actively in building political institutions and the administration.

Two short remarks on Iran in this context. First, as to the direction and the speed of the reform process, we of course have to respect national pride and self-esteem, but when the developments endanger regional stability, this is a legitimate issue of concern for the international community. Second, human rights are not menu items in a self-service restaurant. All UN member states have accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and should act accordingly. With its Human Rights Dialog the EU fosters this insight, not via *octroi* but through incentives. We engage Iran and our other partners in the region to promote these basic humanitarian standards within their societies in order to enhance stability.

Reforms are hindered by
the region's autocratic leaders

Now to the third question: What are the main obstacles to reform? Certainly, the region's autocratic leadership structures are a major impediment. The depiction of democratization as an instrument of Western imperialists by many autocrats—aimed at curbing democratic aspirations and retaining power—does, unfortunately, resonate quite well with certain parts of the population. To make people immune against pseudo-religious or pseudo-political concepts, we need to work patiently for empowering and strengthening civil societies. But while a functioning civil society is an antidote against government propaganda, we also need to build institutions to demonstrate to people in the Middle East the advan-

tages of a functioning democratic framework. Only that will allow us to rein in the danger of nationalism.

Another major obstacle to democratization is the new nationalism emerging in the region. While the rest of the world is increasingly forced to globalize and to develop cross-border approaches to transnational challenges, many countries in the Middle East have started developing an aggressive form of self-centered ideology which denounces fundamental human rights, the rule of law, and democracy as instruments of Western domination. These countries are tempted to resort to 19th century forms of nationalism. Only building functioning institutions will allow good governance and the rule of law to take root in this region.

The developments in the European neighborhood, especially in Eastern Europe, demonstrate that the spread of democracy is maybe not quite a scientific law, but that it does certainly create a fascinating domino effect. Autocratic rulers quite rightly perceive that as an immediate threat. Therefore they deftly counter Western demands for reform with the argument that reforms in non-Western cultures must follow different paths, thus formulating a politically correct pretext for streamlining their societies even more under the pretext of furthering reforms. This leads to processes of self-destruction and self-isolation for their respective societies. Of course, reforms must take into account the religious and cultural conditions of each country. But the West must make very clear that the demand for reforms does come, and has to come, from within society in order to ensure participation in the economic and social fruits of globalization.

This already to a certain extent answers the last question: Should the West keep out? The answer is no, because this region is our neighborhood and therefore its security and stability is our security and stability as well. But we need a different approach. Europe and the US must engage in a comprehensive transatlantic dialog that allows both sides to contribute their respective strengths. The Europeans should share their experiences in overcoming internal instability and regional conflict, which includes various multilateral approaches such as the Council of Europe, the EU, and the OSCE process, based on common values, common standards, human rights, the rule of law, good governance and participation. In particular, the CSCE process of the 1970s provides important ideas on how counterparts with very different ideologies can find ways to cooperate. Even though European institutions should not be seen as role models for the region, they can provide a conceptual framework on how to overcome old trenches. Europe as a region shows how relatively quickly hostile nations can integrate into

New nationalism endangers democratic tendencies

Democratization can trigger a domino effect

Europe has achieved stability and welfare— why not the Middle East?



a stable common framework allowing for stability and welfare. That raises hope for this region, doesn't it?

Cooper
Kings can be good reformers

I hesitate to agree with your condemnation of autocrats. The older I get, the more I find myself in favor of kings. Actually, if I had to choose a non-democratic regime, I would rather live in a monarchy than in a dictatorship. There are constitutional monarchies, but no constitutional dictatorships. Moreover, kings generally feel safer and have less to lose than dictators, because their family's position has been constitutionally enshrined for centuries and their son is guaranteed to be king as well. Hence, good dictators are much rarer than good kings.

Monarchies can provide reliable frameworks for constitutional change and democratization. In Europe, countries that have preserved their monarchies are among the most democratic. The strong democratic traditions of the Netherlands or of the Scandinavian nations, for example, are widely acknowledged. In the Middle East, several monarchies are indisputably reforming more resolutely than many non-monarchies in the region. Some admirable things are happening in Morocco at the moment, and guess who is doing them? King Mohammed VI. Had Saudi Arabia's reformist King Faysal not been murdered in 1975, the developments might have taken another turn. Of course, there are as many bad kings as there are good ones, but every now and then you get lucky and things move on.

Khoury
Would you like to live in a Middle Eastern monarchy?

Mr. Cooper, how about exchanging your British citizenship for some of our Arab citizenships for one year to see how that affects your inclination toward monarchies? You will soon awaken to the widespread and usually well justified discontent in most Middle Eastern monarchies. It is not by chance that terrorists like Osama Bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi are both products of such systems.

Perthes

Maybe we should keep your apologia of monarchies in mind when it comes to discussing the future of the European Constitution, Mr. Cooper?

1. Stability and Nationalism

Perthes

I would now like to focus our discussion on a notion that Michael Schaefer invoked as overarching concept of European policy: stability. Stability can mean very different things and can justify very different courses of action in different situations. In the name of stability, the German and other European governments refused to

The opposite trend to religious fundamentalism would be nationalism.

Kahwaji

participate in the invasion of Iraq, but now they are willing to engage themselves in order to re-stabilize the country. Michael McFaul, the US certainly did not go to Iraq to stabilize Saddam's regime. Was the American concept to de-stabilize the region in the name of stability—in order to re-stabilize it according to their own model?

The Bush Administration is indeed convinced that the alleged stability in the Middle East was a bad thing insofar as for the past 40 years it has failed to create security. Stability no longer trumps all other interests in American Middle East policy. Some proponents of this new approach feel encouraged by political changes in Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and elsewhere and the administration sticks to the idea in spite of the considerable problems in Iraq. The recent developments there have led to a certain counter-movement within the United States, though.

Mr. Cooper, could you as the architect of the European Security Strategy describe in a few words the role of stability for this strategy?

The European Security Strategy does not define security as stability. It is based on the idea that change is inevitable and frequently desirable, and that change is best managed within a multilateral framework.

The more homogeneous a society, the more stable it is. But the countries in the region are ethnically and religiously diverse. In the era of 19th century imperialism or in the settlements after the First World War, Western countries grouped together a chunk from here with a chunk from there, regardless of ethnic divides. Our nations never had the chance to build a national identity from within. Against this background, their politics have been determined by the struggle between nationalist tendencies and religious fundamentalism during the past decades.

During the Cold War, there was a clear divide between left and right, between the supporters of the West and the followers of the Soviet Union. Religious forces were just a minor actor in the political spectrum. But after the collapse of the Communist empire, most leftist camps just faded away, leaving a vacuum, which was easily filled by religious fundamentalists presenting themselves as the main opposition force. To cope with this new threat, many dictators resorted to employing religious rhetoric.

The opposite trend to religious fundamentalism would, in my eyes, be nationalism. But groups like the Kurds or the Assyrians feel threatened by pan-Arab nationalism, because they neither constitute the ethnic majority in their countries

McFaul

Stability no longer trumps all other US interests in the Middle East

Perthes

Cooper

Kahwaji

The ideological vacuum after World War I was filled by the Islamists

A Pandora's box has been opened
in Iraq following the invasion:
Ethnic and religious rivalries

nor belong to the Arab world. Nationalism might be useful as a counterforce to religious fundamentalism. But the diversity of the countries in the Gulf makes the guarantee of minorities' rights and the establishment of functioning democratic procedures a precondition for building states on national identities. Minorities must be able to keep their identity while integrating into the nation-state. Iraq is a prime example of the problems at hand.

After Saddam Hussein tried for decades to impose an Iraqi identity upon his people, the Americans opened a Pandora's Box of diverging ethnic and religious identities and interests when they toppled Saddam and dissolved the structures of his state.

In the UAE, the strong tribal identity has united people on a different level that allows for a stable society and eventually the creation of a regional framework for integration. These tribes are interconnected through marriage and business. Religious fundamentalism and religious feuds are hardly a problem. In Saudi Arabia, by contrast, sectarian groups and economic and social divides pose more of a challenge. But even there, the ordinary citizen is open to regional integration. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is successful on the popular level because people here, especially those from societies with tribal structures, are quite willing to live within a larger entity. The leaders, of course, have their personal interests to protect and are therefore rather opposed to integrating their countries into a multilateral framework.

Perthes

Mr. Atiyah pointed out the crucial role of Arab nationalism for the region in the 1960s, Mr. Schaefer identified new nationalism as a major obstacle to reform and Mr. Kahwaji pointed out the opportunities and risks of pan-Arab nationalism. The destructive side of nationalist sentiments was obvious for example during the Iran-Iraq war, when nationalist slogans, defining the enemy as despicable because of his ethnicity, were widespread. In the dispute between Iran and the UAE over the strategically located islands Abu Musa, Greater Tunbs and Lesser Tunbs near the Strait of Hormuz, nationalist sentiments are invoked regularly. Is nationalism in the region rather a destructive force or is it also used to define a community that pools resources and finds ways to ensure the participation of its members? How is Middle Eastern nationalism perceived in the US?

McFaul

Recently, a group within the Administration has been proposing a new line of thinking. They recommend using nationalism in the Middle East to counter other, more

extreme ideologies. Personally, I am very skeptical as to whether we should try to use nationalism as a tool, because there is always the danger of people abusing nationalist feelings and creating a dynamic that can get out of control anytime.

If we plan to analyze the role of nationalism in the region, clarifying the concept's meaning beforehand might be quite useful. Speaking, as Mr. Atiyyah did, about Arab nationalism, means invoking a conceptual non-entity. There never was a real movement to create a unified Arab nation with a common border and proper institutions, therefore there never was Arab nationalism in the true sense of the word. Arab nationalism is not nationalism but something else, a fig leaf for a whole panoply of other motives and objectives. What one would aim at in Iraq, if one wanted to foster nationalism there, would be Iraqi, not Arab nationalism.

Such a kind of nationalism can indeed be a positive force. Development in the region—i.e. political development, because the much-discussed notion of economic development turns out to be a chimera if you take a closer look—depends on turning people into loyal citizens in the democratic sense of the word. To create the loyalty needed for a functioning state, to make people accept that a candidate whom they did not vote for but who won 55% of the popular vote and implements policies they resent leads the government, to make citizens pay taxes, each state needs a certain sense of community. In Europe, this sense has been based on nationalism during the past 200 years. The community upon which citizens conferred their loyalty has been a national community ever since the Peace of Westphalia established the concept of the sovereign nation-state in 1648. There might of course be other ways and forms. But drawing on the European experience, I would say that if you want to talk democracy, you have to talk nationalism.

I presume all of us concur that nationalism is a potent factor, for all of us, in every society, and one that we have to live with. It is impossible to get rid of it altogether—even if that were to be considered desirable. The recent ethnic conflicts in the Balkans—in the direct neighborhood of Europe—showed clearly that it is a pipe dream to factor out nationalism, ethnicism or tribalism. They are and will remain important determining factors of human society, whether we like it or not. What we really need is to arrive at a sophisticated understanding of their role in human societies and how—I am afraid, this is the difficult part—they affect and shape the behaviour of individuals and communities.

The Pentagon thinks about using nationalism as a counter force against other ideologies

Cooper

There is no such thing as Arab nationalism

In Europe, nationalism was crucial for creating loyalty to the state

Asadi

We will always have to live with nationalism

The traditional reading of Islam and the concept of the nation-state are irreconcilable.

Hadian



Schaefer
Nationalism is dangerous because of its aggressive potential

I stick to my negative assessment of nationalism. Due to our historical experience, Germans are particularly sensitive to any kind of -ism, especially nationalism. The main reason for my resentment is that nationalism is inherently directed against a third party and always has an aggressive undertone. National identity is a very important factor for stability in any society, but nationalism has a destructive potential.

Reissner

I would also like to challenge Mr. Cooper's praise of nationalism. Is democracy inevitably linked to nationalism because it was like that in European history? I doubt it and I wonder what kind of nationalism will eventually emerge in the Arab world. It seems that by now alternatives to the old-fashioned, Nasser-style, top-down nationalism are developing. Whatever the nature of the Arab nation-state will be, it will have to be capable of coping with the challenges of globalization on the one hand and of mobilizing the loyalty of its citizens on the other.

Atiyah

Mr. Cooper was right in expounding the conceptual problems of the notion of "Arab nationalism". When I studied in Lebanon decades ago, everybody spoke of Arab nationalism, but nobody defined what that was supposed to be. It was indeed used as a sort of fig leaf for mustering political support. The Palestinians called out to the Arabs to help them against Israel. The Iraqis invoked Arab nationalism in the 1960s to get their Syrian brothers' support for suppressing the Kurds. When Saddam Hussein spoke about Arab nationalism, he was promoting himself as a custodian of the whole Arab nation. These days, Arab nationalism is a mere synonym for cultural identity. But this identity is in a crisis, not only in Iraq but throughout the whole Arab world.

Hadian

National identity and nationalism face a fundamental problem in the Middle East. To my mind, the traditional reading of Islam and the concept of the nation-state are irreconcilable. This is a problem not only for the Arab world, but also for Western states with large Muslim minorities. You may say that theories about Islam and the nation-state are too abstract to have a political impact, but a convincing interpretation is a precondition for allowing Muslim citizens to be loyal to their nation-state.

Can the concept of the nation-state be reconciled with Islam?

I am therefore glad about the vivid debate on that topic going on in the Muslim world. The existing views can be divided into four categories. First, the traditional, conservative interpretation of Islam claims that all Muslims are brothers and

sisters and that political and territorial borders are thus meaningless. This is the interpretation preferred by most Muslims living in Western countries. Second, the ideological interpretation of Islam demands that the unity of all Muslims should be seen as a political goal. Third, scholars in Iran are developing a reformist interpretation of Islam, in the attempt to reconcile Islam with the institutions and ideas of nation-state on an ontological and epistemological level for the first time in more than a century. The fourth interpretation, which is just developing, is a secular version of Islam which will not conflict with the idea of the nation-state at all.

You were talking about the praiseworthy attempt to reconcile Islam and the nation-state in Iran. I think this is essentially what the new president Ahmadinejad is trying to do. He indeed amalgamates Islamist ideas with nationalistic topics in a way that is, to my knowledge, new in Iranian history. For the first time nationalism is not combined with secularism and the struggle for democratization, but is used to rally support for an Islamist government. I would not call this a reconciliation with a positive impact, though, but rather a very dangerous development

I was not talking about these developments. Instead, I wanted to point out, first, that in spite of the religious foundation of our government, Iranian society is the most secular of all Muslim societies. Surprisingly, our religious government has even contributed to the emergence of this very modern and secular social sphere.

Second, I wish for a reconciliation of nation and religion that will be quite the opposite of fusing nationalism with Islamism. We need a nation-state based on the notion of citizenry and its implications, which means individual human rights. My idea of a nation-state is that I am an Iranian citizen because I live on that particular territory, and as a citizen of Iran I have the freedom to be a Communist citizen or an Islamist citizen or a nationalist citizen or whatever I choose to be within the limits of my constitutional rights.

In Iran, nationalism and Islamism—or the religious factor—have been the two dominating and deeply intertwined aspects determining our identity, respectively several millennia for what can be reckoned as the traditional Iranian nationalism, and for 14 centuries for the Islamic factor. The dynamic, intricate interaction between them has played a critical role in shaping the dominant political concepts and processes in modern Iran since the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–06 with

Hoffmann

Ahmadinejad amalgamates Islamism and nationalism in a dangerous way

Hadian

Asadi

Iran needs to find a balance between nationalism and Islam



a still unfolding dynamism. As none of them can or should be neglected—let alone be suppressed—we Iranians must find a commonly accepted balance between them to be able to move towards achieving long-term, sustainable stability. Iran’s intellectual elites—across a wide political and ideological spectrum—have been working at this for almost a century, and we are still working on it. Let me also further emphasize the relevance and role of the specific reading of religion—Islam—in this regard, as my other Iranian colleague just alluded to.

Hoffmann

Will America use ethnic rifts
to put pressure on Teheran?

I see a great danger, that some people in Washington will try to exploit ethnic rifts in Iran to put the regime in Tehran under pressure and work in the direction of regime change. Fearing a nuclear Iran, the hardliners in Washington are currently stepping up their efforts to destabilize the regime. Drawing on the experiences of the Cold War and the eventual breakdown of the Soviet Union, they use clandestine programs to—as they claim—promote democracy in Iran. I am afraid that somebody might come up with the idea to instigate ethnic tensions to use ethnic minorities who according to estimates account to more than half of the Iranian population to undermine the position of the Mullahs. Since the summer we have already witnessed rising tensions in Kurdistan, with the Arabs in Khus-estan and the Balutch in Sistan-Balutchistan. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have disturbed the fragile order in these border regions, and it should not be too difficult to instigate and exploit this unrest. To my mind it is the most promising way to create trouble for Tehran but it is also the most dangerous. There is no way that the resulting chaos could be controlled by those who instigated it. Promoting ethnic violence in a country with an essentially pre-modern form of coexistence between ethnic groups will lead us not to a Soviet but to a Yugoslav scenario.

Khouri

How to establish national identities
in the Middle East...

The basis for any kind of nationalist identity in the Middle East would be a fundamentally sound nation-state, but there is no such thing in the region. No ethnic group and no single citizen here has ever had the opportunity to engage in the process of national self-determination in recent centuries; instead, modern states and their elites were either imposed by the Europeans or through military coups and maintained by local elites and autocrats. Many people look at the existing nation-states as unsatisfactory remnants of European colonialism. Those states are in danger of being broken down into smaller ethnicities and militias. Between 1920 and 1960 our tribes used to display their flags, nowadays they all have their own militias.

I wish the Western governments promoted self-determination in the Middle East as they did in the Soviet Empire.

Khouri

As the configuration of our nations has never been defined by their own people and as there is no credible participatory process, we are completely ignorant of whether the majority of people in the region consider their states legitimate and are loyal to them. We know very little about the real political preferences of people in the region, because they have no chance to express their will in free and fair elections or in parliaments that accurately represent their populations. As of now, we only have a few ideas based on polls. I do not know whether, for example, Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq or Tunisia are fully legitimate or natural nations—I am not saying they are not, but neither I nor anybody else knows. My personal impression is that many people talk not so much about the Arab states, but rather speak of Sunnis, Shias and Kurds; Maronites, Copts and Druse; and Orthodox and Berbers.

Western powers do not comprehend the fundamental nature of the problem. They think that they have learned, and plan to carve up the Arab world again, this time in terms of Shia and Kurds and Sunnis. But that would only mean to make the same mistake again and would lead to a catastrophe similar to the one we had after 1920. What we need to do is reconsider the basic configurations of the existing nation-states. What we need to do is give people a chance to redefine their national affiliation, once and for all. What we need is not a re-run of European colonialism or post-World War I decolonization, but self-determination for the citizens of the Middle East. I wish the Western governments had that same kind of open-minded attitude to self-determination among the people in the Middle East as they had towards the reconfiguration of the Soviet Empire.

That would also be the only way to lasting stability. Security or stability cannot be imposed, but must be developed through self-determination and participation of the citizens. When you are able to live a normal life, when you are treated decently by your own government, when you are not occupied by foreign armies, when you are not attacked by neighboring countries, when citizens can enjoy their basic human or civil or democratic rights, security and stability will flourish.

Stability and security are indeed the consequence of a process. They are not something we can realize through a fiat. Maybe we as Westerners should not overstretch the term “goal” when defining what we seek to achieve in the region, but rather speak of a “process.”

Mr. Khouri, of course the aspirations of the people in the region are the foundation of any efforts of nation building and democratization, not only in the Middle

... without sound nation-states?

We need self-determination!

zu Guttenberg

Schaefer

Many people in the region are quite aware of the distinction between national identity and an aggressive form of nationalism.

Perthes

Self-determination is crucial, but why not learn from other countries' experiences?

East. I have learned from my work in the Balkans that the most important thing is to allow people to develop their own concepts and ideas as to how their society should work. But at the same time it is important to prevent them from making the same mistakes over and over again. Therefore, it can be very useful to share our experiences. Attempts to create a new society in a process of trial and error have often ended in disastrous conflicts.

Cooper

Mr. Khouri, how should that self-determination you ask for be implemented? People can only express their will through institutions. If I understand you correctly, you despise colonization as much as you dislike decolonization, and you are not very fond of the nation-state either. Through which institutions would you like people in the Middle East to determine where and how they want to live?

Perthes

Nationalism is a very complex and to a certain extent a frightening phenomenon. But let me add a more positive note. Traveling in the region at the beginning of the year, I found that the intellectual discourse in a proto-state like Iraqi Kurdistan is already quite advanced. Kurdish experts speak, of course, of the need for Kurdish nationalism, yet at the same time they warn against Kurdish chauvinism. Their people suffered so much from Arab chauvinism that they do not want to fall into the same trap. There are many people in the region who are quite aware of the important distinction between national identity and an aggressive form of nationalism.

2. Democratization

Perthes

I would now like to focus on another question, namely democratization. Iraq is probably the most controversial example here. Mr. Cooper, how do you evaluate the current situation?

Cooper

Will Iraq get a constitution that commands the people's loyalty?

Mr. Schaefer was quite right in stating that Iraq is at a critical point as it decides about its constitution. Every democracy must be based on some kind of national compact that is usually written down in the form of a constitution. The question is whether Iraq will get a constitution to which the overwhelming majority—not just 50%, but 90% or 95%—are loyal. The referendum with a no vote of 82% and 97% respectively in the Sunni majority provinces of Salah al Din and Anbar and of 55% in Ninewa shows clearly that this is not the case now. But there is always



a dialog between electoral and constitutional processes. Creating a constitution without people who are representative and therefore authorized to draft it is as impossible as appointing representatives without having any system of representation. Iraq has been moving through the process of an interdependent development of both components, and the next six months will show whether it will be possible to bring everybody together around the constitution with a constitutional revision and another referendum. Ultimately, we are going to see whether Iraq will work out or not. To my mind, it is absolutely vital for all of us that it does work out, and I sincerely hope that the necessary spirit of compromise will arise soon enough to keep the political process alive.

There are two different schools of thought about the way to democracy. One says that before playing the democratic game and having elections you need an agreement among the stakeholders about the basic rules of the game. The other claims, to the contrary, that in places like Iraq there is no time to wait for such an act of transition. Elections must come first to create a cornerstone for the democratic process. The Bush Administration without doubt belongs to the second school of thought and therefore sees the mere fact of elections taking place, no matter what their outcome will be, as proof that Iraq is a success story of creating democracy and stability.

But, as we saw in Angola in 1992, when the UNITA refused to accept the results of the election and started a new civil war, elections can also be a stepping stone to precisely the opposite objective, i. e. to attempt to destabilize the country to gain power. I would like to ask the participants from the region how they interpret the relationship between participation in the elections and progress towards democratic rule? What do you think about the participation of the Sunnis, and do Mr. Sadr's activities prove his successful integration into the electoral process or show that he uses the election process to reach other political objectives?

Forgive me, but when you mentioned the possibility of using democratic elections for undemocratic goals or simply for gaining power, the first person that came to my mind is Dick Cheney. I mention that only to demonstrate that suspicions of illicit conduct are no less frequent in the Middle East vis-a-vis the US as they are in US vis-a-vis Middle Eastern countries.

The problem with democratic elections seems to be that the people in foreign countries often do not vote as we would have liked them to—many Europeans,

McFaul

Elections or a functioning political system—
what should come first?

Khouri

Perthes

Can the US bring democracy to Iran like it did in Germany and Japan after 1945?

for example, would have preferred a different outcome of the elections in Iran and in the United States.

Mr. Atiyah put forward the assumption in his presentation that the Bush Administration hopes to bring democracy to Iraq as it brought democracy to Germany and Japan after 1945. Is that true, and can any historical lessons be learned?

Cooper

The US did not bring democracy to Germany

The notion that America brought democracy to Germany in 1945 is as widespread as it is unfounded. As American military governor in Germany after the Second World War, General Lucius D. Clay, kept writing letters back to the State Department in which he asked them to “please explain this democracy stuff that I am supposed to teach the Germans, because I am not quite sure I really understand it”. As far as I know, he never got an answer. It seems that the Germans knew as much about democracy as General Clay did.

Perthes

Germans will keep on believing that the US brought us democracy anyway, and we have actually done quite well believing it up to now.

von Maltzahn

Iraq is more like Lebanon than like post-war Germany

The situation in Iraq is much more similar to the situation in Lebanon in recent years than to the American democratization efforts in Japan and Germany after the Second World War. In Lebanon, the influential Maronite minority felt threatened by the rise of other forces and did its best to maintain its power—even when the result was a prolonged civil war. There is a similar situation in Iraq with the Sunni minority which had been dominant for a long time before the Americans intervened.

An additional similarity catches the eye. In Lebanon, there was also an American intervention and this attempt to pacify the country in the early 1980s via a “pax Americana” failed. Syria, Lebanon’s predominant neighbor, wound up with the upper hand here. We know how this “pax Syriana” ended—with the withdrawal of the Syrian troops and security forces under international pressure because of the alleged involvement of Syria in the assassination of former Lebanese President Hariri. Next to Iraq, there is an equally predominant neighbor, Iran. Identification with the Shia majority, which is no longer suppressed, offers Iran ample reason to want to play this predominant role. Therefore I take some comfort in the fact that the American administration is finally thinking about some kind of joint strategy with Iran. This will be to Iraq’s benefit.



In Iraq, a new situation has arisen since the Shiite majority has re-entered the political sphere after having been marginalized not only under Saddam but practically since the emergence of modern Iraq as an independent state in the early 1920s. We understand that many in the region fear that Iran could gain considerable influence on Iraqi politics via the Shiites. Well, a matter of fact is that the political structure in Iraq has changed, and that this is an intrinsically Iraqi phenomenon. The implications of this radically changed situation for Iran, as a neighbor, is a different matter. But if a reasonable balance between the Shiite majority and the two most important minorities, the Sunnis and the Kurds, is achieved through a democratic structure and process and commensurate with their relative demographic weight, then, the resulting situation will help stabilize the situation in Iraq, and needless to say, it will be in everybody's interest—Iran's as well as others, in and out of the region.

Let us now turn to the question of what should be done. It appears that while everybody agrees that regional cooperation is a *conditio sine qua non* of achieving stability, there is some disagreement about the degree to which foreign actors should engage in the region. Mr. Khouri holds self-determination in high esteem, whereas Mr. Asadi asserted that, in a globalized world, everything is deeply interconnected and that foreign engagement in the region is inevitable. Some Western experts are quite suspicious about the term self-determination, because historically it has all too often been used by Arab and other dictators to legitimize their dictatorships, fending off external actors and actually denying their people the ability to determine their own ways of life. Finally, Mr. Khouri warned us not to overlook the differences between the countries of the region.

Listening to our friends in the region, it becomes even more clear to me how crucial it is to avoid the impression that we want to impose Western-style democracy on people in the Middle East. My definitions of democracy are clear: First, in a democracy government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the people and second, democracy is being able to get rid of a government without bloodshed. But there are three caveats when trying to promote democracy here:

First, we should not try to implement Western style parliamentarianism, or our system of political parties. But building democracy is impossible without establishing democratic institutions, as Mr. Cooper made clear. We must ensure that democracy does not mean unlimited rule by 51% over the rest of the country, and

Asadi

A balance between the Shiite majority and the minorities in Iraq must be found

Perthes

Polenz

Imposing Western style parliamentarianism would be counterproductive

Can the Iranian Constitution provide ideas for a credible concept for democracy in the Muslim world?

Polenz



Governments in the Muslim world need a religious justification

we must fight the “winner takes all” mentality and the fear of losing power that are the main reasons for the corruption of politics and orchestrated elections. If we focus on strengthening the rule of law and participation, for example by training lawyers and members of the judiciary system, this might be perceived as a more credible kind of support by people in the region.

Second, it is obviously very hard in the Muslim world to establish a legitimate government without some kind of religious justification. We should work on a constructive approach. The Iranian constitution, for example, provides us with an interesting example of a dual track for legitimacy, from Allah and from the people. Let us take a close look at this idea and think about which aspects of it might provide the Muslim world with a credible concept for democracy.

Third, help from the outside will be accepted only when its ultimate goal is the self-determination of those being helped. This is of course extremely difficult to achieve because of the region’s history—from the crusades to colonialism—and because of the present behavior of the United States and Europe and their obvious interests regarding the energy resources in the region.

Khouri

Self-determination must indeed be the overarching goal of political reform in the region, but I do not think that it is especially hard to achieve in the Arab world. As this is the last region on the planet to democratize and to be liberated from foreign armies, we can learn from previous experiences. And we have had a vivid debate on that topic during the past 15–20 years. Before September 11, 2001, while many Western politicians and experts were supporting the autocrats in the region, people here were already thinking about how to replace these regimes with better ones.

What should be our political goal for the Middle East?

I use the rather abstract term self-determination because I do not want to be presumptuous and judge what is good for others. But if we want to implement the proposal there is no way around using more specific terms. So what is it that we are aiming at here in the region? Where could the aspirations of the region’s people and the values of the West coincide? I am confident that basically both sides are talking about the same thing, but how do we name it?

I suspect that I have reasonably good insights into what people from different cultures strive for and how they name it, because I am a Christian by religion, an Arab by identity, a Palestinian by nationality, a Levantine Muslim by culture and a Jordanian and American by citizenship.

Democracy is a problematic term ...

So what would the appropriate term be? I hesitate to talk about democracy because this term has a specific Western connotation. The majority of people in

On “good governance” the West and the Middle East can agree.

Khoury



the region are not explicitly asking for democracy or European or American style republicanism. As reasonable, normal, moderate people—which most people here are, whatever the Western perceptions may be—they want decent societies without ideological excesses or abuses of power. But they do not call it democracy. People in the region, whether they are Arab nationalists, Islamists, tribalists, democrats or civil society activists, have for decades been asking for dignity and justice. Justice has been the rallying cry of the Islamists since the late 1970s.

The label under which the West and the Middle East can meet and translate their common principles into a common operative mechanism should, I think, be “good governance,” because that is something we can agree on. Our goals should be an independent judiciary and the rule of law, freedom of expression and association, and access to information, and adequate structures of representation.

Law-based governance with an independent judiciary is the goal of the West and of people in the region. That might in our case mean Sharia-based governance, because Sharia is what many people in the region mean when they talk about law. I as a Christian Arab with a Western-oriented education think that—of course, despite excesses like those in Afghanistan under the Taliban—Sharia-based law is basically a positive thing. It fulfills the basic condition of law-based governance in that it provides criteria of justice, institutions to appeal to and a mechanism of last resort for agreements that cannot be reached through politics.

Furthermore, we need to strive for societies where people have access to information and can express themselves freely. That is an integral element of societies which can be considered free societies in the eyes of the West, and it is something the people in the region crave, too.

Finally, we need mechanisms for representation and participation. That is a critical point, both in the eyes of the West and of the population here. Participation can be achieved in many ways: under a banana tree in Somalia, in a legislative assembly in Beirut, in a tribal council in Yemen, or through Sharia consultation. What counts is an inherent mechanism of accountability through a representative process.

How can the West support these principles? Affirm your commitments, assist societies that apply these principles, and even reward progress, but let the people define them in their own terms. Many people at the local level are already working on these issues. We certainly do not have to reinvent the wheel. If the West

...so let us speak of good governance

Reformers in the region need Western support, not Western octrois



supports their work towards justice, representation and pluralism without imposing Western concepts, we may one day see a whole panoply of decent societies in the Islamic world that are considered free and democratic by the West and worth living in by their citizens.

McFaul

Rule of law, freedom of expression—
that is democracy!

Everything you just said is democracy. Rule of law, freedom of expression and representation, self-determination—these are exactly the criteria for democracy I have been teaching in my course for 20 years. I do not see the difference.

Cooper

But wording is crucial: Avoid terms
which people in the region resent

Wording is of crucial importance in this context. If you speak of democracy, you emphasize one particular bit of the system, which is people actually voting. But what we want and what people in the region can agree to—as long as we do not insist on calling it democracy—is a package consisting not only of elections but also of transparency, accountability and, most importantly, the rule of law (actually, the reason why I like democracy is because it is probably the only way of preserving the rule of law). As Fareed Zakaria argues, even though a bit exaggeratedly, in his book “The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad”, elections by no means always produce the other central features of democracy. Therefore I myself fear people who just keep repeating the word democracy, democracy, democracy.

At the last European summit in Washington, the joint EU/US statement on democracy talks about the terms rule of law, accountability and human rights to make clear that democracy is not just about elections, but about the whole way society is governed.

McFaul

To my mind, the important question is how to implement these concepts, because that is where the difference between real democracy and democratic fig leaves for authoritarian regimes lies. Who gets to decide the rules for representation? For example, who gives the Emirs of the UAE the right to decide who has the right to vote?

Steltzer

The five small Gulf states within the GCC are probably those most open to reform and development in this region. The UAE already has the second largest economy in the Arab world. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report 2005–2006, this year the UAE is in 18th place considering its economic progress, whereas Germany is 15th and France 30th. In the UN Human Develop-

Americans and Europeans must recognize that there is not only one single model of democracy and not only one concept of the rule of law.

Schaefer

ment Report (HDR) of 2005, the UAE ranks number 40, which puts it at number one in the Arab world. Even in the field of equal rights for women, a particularly delicate problem in this part of the world, there has been a great amount of progress. Over 65% of students in the UAE are women.

On the other hand, there has been hardly any progress toward democratization. There are no elections of any kind, even though there are ongoing discussions within the ruling families. But you have to keep in mind that the UAE is facing a very grave demographical problem. Only 18% of its population are Emiratis, i.e. nationals. Taking the current economic growth rate and its consequences as a basis, this figure will be down to 5% by 2025. Equal voting rights for all residents could then result in a total loss of national identity. Yet it would also seem ridiculous to give only such a small minority the right to vote. There are no easy answers to this dilemma.

Mr. Khouri and Mr. McFaul are equally right: the three basic principles of participation, the rule of law, and human rights are at the core of the transition to a modern society. But on the other hand, who will define the procedures in which these principles will be implemented? Maybe Mr. Polenz's reference to institutions is the key: A modern society needs a procedural framework that guarantees transparency, accountability and a sense of participation, not only for the elites, but also for the middle and lower classes.

Americans and Europeans must recognize that there is not only one single model of democracy and not only one concept of the rule of law. We need to formulate procedures in order to implement international standards tailor-made for specific societies.

What Mr. Khouri said was a very convincing appeal to listen to what people in the region really want. Thank you for explaining that the call for Sharia-based law is not only an Islamist idea but can also be seen as an expression of the search for justice. And thank you for reminding me that we need much more concrete dialog and fewer big, vague words like democracy und human rights. We from the West should always ask ourselves: on what grounds are we at all invited to promote anything in the region? Who wants us here and for what?

Equal voting rights in the UAE would result in the loss of national identity

Schaefer

Institutions are the key to democratization

Reissner

3. Multilateral Initiatives

Perthes

Let us now move to a more concrete level. The region cannot complain about a lack of initiatives from its Western partners. While the US has developed its Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), NATO put forth the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), and the EU offers countries in the region two concepts for cooperation: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership—or Barcelona Process—and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that is supposed to complement the Barcelona Process. Which are these initiatives' respective potentials and shortcomings, which of them is suitable for which country in the region, and how should they complement, substitute or support each other?

Hollis

The ENP does not work very well
for the Middle East...

I doubt that the European Neighbourhood Policy is the silver bullet to foster reform in the region. Many representatives of the EU seem to think that negotiating individual action plans within the ENP in addition to the multilateral Barcelona approach will create ownership and thus home grown reform. But the ENP, even though extremely rich in possibilities, does not work too well for the region, because it is a fundamentally European approach.

... because it was created with
Ukraine and Moldova in mind

The ENP was created with Ukraine and Moldova in mind. To ensure stability at the Eastern border of the EU without overstretching the Union, the idea was to offer these countries the same as candidate states to the EU except for membership. Helping countries create democracy and market economies would create stability. The Action Plans allow countries to set priorities with regard to which parts of the *acquis communautaire* they want to adopt and with which reforms they want help from the EU. Countries might indeed like the opportunity to cherry-pick from the *acquis*. However, they are not equipped to make an informed choice. Plus the EU insists on the inclusion of certain items like reform of the judiciary, the role of women, privatisation and the establishment of market economies which carry a European signature to such an extent that I doubt countries from the region do really feel they have an ownership in them.

Schaefer

The European Neighbourhood Policy was not only designed specifically to deal with Ukraine and Moldova. It resulted from the European Security Strategy's idea that beyond enlargement, the EU needs to establish a belt of stable neighboring countries in order to secure its own internal stability.

Of course the European Neighbourhood Policy is not a fantastic thing. It has been in effect only for a few years, therefore it is a little early to say it does not work, but don't worry: it will not work because nothing ever works, and you will find a lot more to criticize in the future. Nevertheless, the ENP's mechanism of rewarding those neighboring countries who are willing to promote good governance is fundamentally the right concept. Giving Morocco more money than Tunisia is the ENP's way of promoting the rule of law. This policy supports reform in subtle ways—we say to the countries, look, if you want to have foreign investment, you need to have better commercial courts, and we will help you with that.

The ENP's very comprehensive package of rules, institutions and support mechanisms was sold to Eastern European countries with the implicit prospect of paving the way toward membership. That was not said explicitly, but that is what made the ENP attractive to countries like Ukraine and Moldova. Nowadays, this prospect of membership is becoming ever more distant for Eastern Europe, and for the Middle Eastern countries membership is not even on the table—so why would these states adopt the *acquis communautaire*? Of course Europe would welcome their adoption of the *acquis*, the process and the outcome, but what is in it for countries in the Middle East? If we sell them the ENP on the promise of closer integration with the single market, we may not be able to deliver. Neighboring countries doubt the real seriousness of the EU in all this.

The Neighbourhood Policy is not the EU's most serious policy: that would be European enlargement. Promoting the rule of law in countries like Bulgaria and Romania with the goal of taking them into the European Union is real policy, and real effort and real money are put into it. We can also see the power of this policy, for example, in Turkey. It is exerted rather by accident there, as many people in the EU object to Turkish membership. But the existing membership perspective is, slightly against our will, forcefully promoting democracy in Turkey. Even more so in Ukraine: The flags that the protesters of the Orange Revolution were waving included European flags. These flags were a symbol of what modern Ukrainians want to become and what their goal is when they support democratic forces in their country—although most people in Brussels run a mile when anybody suggests that Ukraine might become part of the European Union.

Cooper

Support within the ENP framework can be an incentive for reform

Hollis

Cooper

The EU's most effective policy is enlargement

BMENA constitutes an artificial attempt
by Western experts to create a common solution
for completely different countries.

Hadian



zu Guttenberg

Where do our friends from the region see themselves with regard to concepts like the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, BMENA. Disregarding its ill-chosen name, does the concept catch the reality or do you feel like you are situated on a parallel level or on a meta-level?

Hadian

BMENA is flawed – there is no “Broader Middle East and North African” identity

BMENA suffers from a fundamental constructional flaw: there is no “Broader Middle Eastern and North African” identity comparable, for example, to the European identity. Nor does the concept inspire or anticipate the creation of such an identity. BMENA constitutes an artificial attempt by Western experts to create a common solution for completely different countries facing entirely different problems. If you put aside the basic rules of conceptual precision for political reasons you may at best be able to justify targeting this group of countries in a joint initiative with the fact that they all suffer from authoritarianism or a lack of democracy. But even then, to be of any political use a common strategy can be applied only in countries whose problems call for a common solution, and nobody can reasonably say that that of Morocco, Iran and Afghanistan.

Kahwaji

Being already overwhelmed with initiatives from Europe and the United States, the region does not need another initiative, but more credibility on the part of the West.

Meyer

The Barcelona Process ...

The EU is currently working on a strategic partnership with the Gulf region equivalent to the EU’s Barcelona Process with North African countries. But what worked well for North Africa need not be the best way of dealing with the Gulf.

... builds on economic incentives ...

In the negotiations over Barcelona and over the Action Plans within the framework of the ENP, the North African partner countries had to swallow many hidden demands concerning values and human rights, in order to get the economic benefits they wanted. Governments were thus forced to agree to something they had not asked for, but the people of these countries can refer to these agreements and ask their governments to deliver what they promised.

... but that mechanism does not work
for the rich Gulf countries

The conditions in rich Gulf countries like Dubai are totally different. Because of their natural resources and financial wealth they do not need economic support and the EU cannot use incentives to push its agenda for reforms. Also, we should seriously ask ourselves in what direction we really want to change the existing conditions. For its strategic partnership with the Gulf region, the EU should use

different incentives. Here, cooperation in areas like the fight against terrorism can be attractive enough for governments to make them accept commitments in areas like human rights or other EU priorities.

Comparing the American and European ways of promoting democracy and stability in the region, what are the biggest differences? Is it the fact that the US is following a top-down-approach, as Mr. Schaefer suggested, while the EU prefers to build cooperation from the bottom up?

There is no empirical proof that the Americans historically have a top-down approach to promote democracy and that the Europeans have a bottom-up approach. Two military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq—which were of course prime examples for a top-down approach—have brought a lot of confusion in this regard.

But the United States has never invaded a country or gone to war in the name of democracy. There is just never popular support for it. The Bush administration went to war to eliminate Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction. Only once the soldiers were in and did not find any such weapons, the administration justified the invasion retrospectively as a means to promote democracy.

The Europeans are much more influenced by Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points with their emphasis on self-determination than the Americans are. Opinion polls show that the idea of promoting democracy gets a much more positive response in Europe than it does in the USA.

Top-down approaches are not actually determining the promotion of democracy from the side of the US. Look at which American actors are actually promoting democracy and how they do it. Then you will see that Americans apply the bottom-up approach much more consistently than the Europeans: the American actors are Internews, Freedom House (FH), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI). They have very little to do with the government, in stark contrast to the European Neighbourhood Policy which is actually a state-to-state approach.

Despite your insistence that the United States favors bottom-up approaches, we have seen many examples of democracy being promoted in a top-down way. Especially the rhetoric of “frontiers of freedom and democracy” puzzles not only the

Perthes

America and Europe: top-down vs. bottom-up approach?

McFaul

The US does not have a top-down approach ...

Cooper

McFaul

... but a bottom-up strategy

Schaefer

We in Europe do not have that impression

people in the region but also us in Europe who have been promoting democracy for quite a while and quite successfully.

McFaul

At least the US does have a strategy

Of course, the US administration has different country strategies to the EU, but I contest the idea that the European strategies are better because, to be honest, I can hardly identify any. Of course, I hear the words “ENP” and “engagement” over and over again. But while I could outline the strategy of the Bush administration to promote democracy in Iran rather precisely and then debate its merits, I have no idea what the EU strategy for promoting democracy in Iran is. I personally believe that the US strategy in Iran is wrong, but at least they have one.

Schaefer

What we mean by engagement is the active participation of the people in order to establish those procedures in societies that ensure principles like participation, transparency and legitimacy.

Cooper

Open support for the democratic opposition in Iran would do more harm than good

If the EU was to openly promote democracy in Iran through NGOs and somebody would notice, that would be the kiss of death for those we want to support, given recent history. Our work in Iran is done indirectly. We see WTO membership as a way of promoting democracy because it would reduce the power of some of the undemocratic forces. If there are funds available we may support groups of doctors or environmentalists, and scholarships are also a good thing. Anything more aggressive than that would be the worst thing we could do to the democratic forces.

Furthermore, I doubt that Iran needs promotion from the EU or the US to become democratic. Iran is a society which could become a democracy any minute. This does not have to happen through a revolution—I hope it will not, because revolutions normally end up with someone like Mao, Lenin or Cromwell in charge. But some day, something will happen and Iran will be democratic and I do not think that will be much of the result of what we do.

Hadian

Instead of giving money to oppositional Iranian NGOs...

I agree that any public international support does more harm than good to Iranian NGOs. Unfortunately, the US Congress just passed a law to contribute over seventy five million dollars to Iran’s NGOs and opposition forces. This will no doubt greatly undermine their credibility, and moreover, many of those NGOs which have flourished in recent years are going to be closed down because they will be accused of being foreign agents. The Americans should stop this kind of direct financial aid immediately—it is not helpful at all.

The West should accept the national interests and the geographical and economic realities also of those countries which are not among its favorites for political reasons.



Asadi

But concrete incentives may help, for instance, on human rights or the ban of harsh punishments. We have to emphasize those goals in the areas of participation, minority rights, good governance, accountability, the rule of law, and so on which are achievable, and the West should reward concrete steps instead of always talking about democracy as a vaguely defined collective term for everything that is desirable to Western minds. To generally condemn Iran for being undemocratic is not helpful.

Engagement in an interconnected world should, first and foremost, mean genuine subscription to multilateralism, and should not at any rate mean military intervention. Sitting here in late 2005 and looking at the world with the benefit of hindsight—particularly for us Iranians buffeted between two still on-going cases of outside military intervention—one cannot but come to the conclusion that the use of force does not bring about sustainable change. Judging from our own century-long experience—to which I alluded earlier—and also of others in the region and farther away the emergence of a civil society as a fundamental prerequisite and stepping stone towards democracy has to come from within, not via foreign intervention. Engagement from outside—which I reckon to be absolutely inevitable and unavoidable in our deeply interconnected and ever-complicating world—should aim at helping foster, through home-grown processes and dynamisms, a general agreement on fundamental concepts of democracy, rule of law and accountable governance. In politics, it always used to take two to tango. Today, to tango it takes a whole lot of partners—stakeholders, as the current parlance goes.

So contemporary foreign policy is no longer a tango but rather a polka where everybody is involved.

I wonder whether we can easily find a common understanding of the parameters of engagement, even if we try to keep them on a very general level.

I have one concrete piece of advice for you: The West should also accept the national interests and the geographical and economic realities of those countries in the region which are not among its favorites for political reasons. For example, the United States' opposition to the gas pipeline through Iran, was motivated, as we all know, by purely political incentives and against obvious economic and geographic realities, not only led to further tension between Tehran and Washington, but also

... the West should reward progress in the area of human rights

Asadi

The use of force does not bring about sustainable change

Perthes

zu Guttenberg

Asadi

Europe must improve its picture
in the region, because most US shortcomings
are also attributed to the EU.

Kahwaji

created tensions between Tehran and those countries in this region that were pressured by the US to decline the project. The US foreign policy lacks sensitivity for the regional circumstances. In this regard, the EU seems to be doing a better job. Let us all remember that each and every country has a number of genuine national concerns and interests that are not polity-specific or transient. They stay around and outlive political regimes. They have to be recognized by others as enduring and legitimate concerns and interests. Such a recognition by others, neighbours and otherwise, would help everybody arrive at a better understanding of the parameters involved for developing more harmonious relations.

Perthes If the European Union's approach is so convincing, then why do people in the region not appreciate the EU like they should?

Schaefer
How can the EU win over people
in the Middle East?

The EU has difficulties in selling its rather evolutionary concepts because they are not producing visible results within measurable time spans. Indeed, the Americans are seen as the ones who are doing things, whether bad or good. But this should not be a reason to give up long-term engagement. Maybe our local partners can help us find ways to tell the ordinary people, in a credible way, what the European goals and the potential benefits for the people of the Middle East are. This is equally important for the Americans, because they basically want the same as we do: Cooperation to make the societies fit for the challenges they are facing.

Kahwaji Everything that comes from the West is under suspicion. The widespread feeling of repression and the outrage about the situation in Israel have been exacerbated by what the West, especially the US, has done in the course of its so-called global war on terror. Plus, unlike 15 years ago, today there is a very active free media in the region with credible, well-respected commentators. These commentators challenge most Western initiatives, often for good reasons. Their criticism increases people's suspicion that some kind of Trojan horse is concealed in each Western offer, with the ultimate goal of re-colonizing the region.

Khoury Recent polls show that people in the region see not Iran, but the United States, Great Britain and Israel as their biggest threat.

Kahwaji
The West needs a communication strategy
To change this, the West has to work a lot more on communicating its policy through the Arab media. You must attempt to convince those who shape public



opinion. How? My advice would be: sensitivity and honesty. Tell people the truth and consider how they experience the reality in the region.

A recent example of bad communication is the Egyptian election. The Western experts only spoke about the tremendous step towards reform, while ignoring the fundamental democratic deficits of the elections. Therefore, the majority of Egyptians say that this election was approved and orchestrated by the United States. As a result, the United States end up losing even more credibility.

Europe should work especially hard to improve its picture in the region, because as a matter of fact most US shortcomings are also attributed to the EU. The masses are hardly able to identify a difference between the two. If Europe produces honest and trustworthy assessments of what happens in the region and makes use of the free media in order to communicate them to the people, it may win over the hearts and minds and get support for its initiatives.

Governments in the region have been very adept in using Western interest groups, in particular those which lobby for big companies, for deflecting Western pressure. Each time the pressure on authoritarian regimes in the region grew stronger, they were able to reduce this pressure by giving big contracts, especially oil contracts, to Western firms who would then activate their lobby groups to defend the regimes, so the contracts were used as a kind of bribe to divide the Europeans and the Americans.

It was quite helpful to realize that all of us here agree upon the importance of basic human rights: political participation, the rule of law, and freedom of expression. In that, we have made enormous progress. But in order to transform this progress in the political sphere, we have to be very careful with the words we use. I am thankful to Mr. McFaul for reminding us that the war in Iraq was originally not waged for the sake of democracy, and to Mr. Khouri and Mr. Cooper for analyzing why using the term “democracy” in the region might be counterproductive for the time being.

If I may, I would like to make another, very open remark to Mr. McFaul: You have defended American policy in the Middle East very convincingly and have painted a promising picture of what the US wants to and will achieve. But to be honest, I have my doubts that the present President of the United States has listened carefully to your teachings—or maybe he has forgotten them. Therefore American foreign policy may not be what you wish, in rhetoric as well as in substance.

von Weizsäcker

Let us be careful with the term “democracy”

II. The Social and Economic Basis for Reform

Perthes

In our second session we will focus on the social and economic conditions for reform. What should local actors do and where can Western experts and governments help? Rami Khouri, Editor-at-Large of the Daily Star in Beirut will analyze the question at hand from a local perspective, while Michael McFaul from the Hoover Institution, a leading expert on democratization, will provide a Western perspective.

Khouri

The Arab world has been struggling with the same problems for decades ...

As I have spent most of my adult life in the region, these introductory remarks are not only an academic, but also a personal account of the challenges facing the Arab world. My children, the fourth generation of Arabs in countries which have been nominally sovereign for decades, still have to face the same problems that my grandparents faced almost a century ago: Identity, governance, basic human needs, the role of Zionism, relations with Israel and relations with the West, the balance between secularism and religion, between individual identity and collective identity, the role of gender, the relations between the Arab majority and the non-Arab minorities. The majority of the population is still unsatisfied with the situation, to say the least. People express their discontent through various means, including resignation, emigration, and radicalization.

... because five crises have pertained ...

The reasons for that lie in five crises that have affected the Arab world for decades. I am using the term Arab world here in its narrow sense, which excludes Iran and Turkey, but many of these issues affect these countries as well.

... the crisis of sustainable human development ...

The first crisis concerns sustainable human development throughout the Arab world. Between 1980 and 1995, according to the annual Arab Economic Report published by the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the League of Arab States, the population of the Arab world increased by 53%, while the GDP increased by a mere 21%. This is equivalent to a 20% decline in Gross Domestic Product per capita. To give the example of a specific country, in Jordan income per capita measured in dollars declined by 59%. And Jordan is not even close to being the worst case. Throughout the region, per capita real income in dollar-constant terms declined from 2,244 dollars in 1985 to 908 dollars in 1995. That amounts to a crisis of basic human needs in areas like food and water, health care or environmental issues. During the last two decades, most of the people in the Arab world have either become poorer or have just barely maintained their level of poverty.

... the crisis of statehood ...

The second crisis concerns statehood. Most of the Arab countries have faced huge, sometimes existential, crises of statehood during the past decades: border



conflicts, civil war, terrorism, domestic insurrections, violence, and massive emigration. Many of them are still facing such crises in one way or another.

The third crisis is a crisis of citizenship rights. In most countries in the region, citizens have no clear knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. Neither the exercise of power nor the limitations of the state have been clearly defined by the people in most Arab countries for most of their period of independence, whether 80, 50 or 30 years, which affects good governance and democratic aspirations.

...the crisis of citizenship rights...

The fourth crisis is about identity at the levels of the state, the community and the individual. Apart from the official national and sub-regional entities (like the Gulf Cooperation Council or the North African Union), there are ethnic identities, tribal identities, and transnational identities, including pan-Arabism or the Islamic Umma. In addition to transnational organized crime at the regional and global level, nations have also been called into question during the past decades by globalized commercialism and consumerism. This crisis of identities is further complicated by the powerful and complex role of religion.

...the crisis of identity...

The fifth crisis concerns the coexistence with the people of Israel and of the role of Western powers in the region. For generations people have struggled with how to relate to Israel and the British, the Americans, and their respective armed forces. These armies have frequently been active in the region and that has not changed until today. We are the only region in the world still suffering from foreign intervention on a large scale.

...and the crisis concerning the coexistence with Israel and the role of the West

Because of their combination and their persistence these five crises have had a truly deadly effect: They have triggered a steady radicalization of those who felt mistreated by their own political structure, be it their national governments or occupying forces. Not very surprisingly, anger and skepticism today determine the region's relationship with the Western powers. Now, even when being offered help in promoting democracy, freedom and human rights (which are things that we want), people are deeply skeptical because of their historical experiences.

Two seminal moments led to concerns among the younger population about their citizenship rights as citizens and quality of life. I am not talking about 9/11, but about the oil boom and its interruption in the 1970s, and about the end of the Cold War. These historic moments led to societies with intense pressures, distortions, corruption, violence, militarism, and autocracy, and finally to the willingness of the people to fight back. Today, in contrast to the Western world, the Arab world is a region of extraordinary youth. Close to 65% of our population is under the age of 30 and mostly educated. Their education is a good thing but



Young frustrated urban citizens
turn to radicalism

at the same time paradoxically worsens their problems, because they are mostly unemployable in any productive way other than for the most fundamental farming and simple manual labor. The fact that they mostly live in urban areas does not make things any easier.

This large, educated, unemployable, frustrated urban citizenry brings about developments like those in Algeria, for instance, or Yemen, or any other Arab country where hopeless people, who turned to God and were disappointed by the religious movement or were denied a chance to compete politically, decided to dedicate themselves to suicide bombings, killing and destruction because their lives no longer had any meaning.

In this situation, our big challenge is to find the right balance in several areas: First, a balance between democracy and dignity. Some people will understandably prefer autocratic solutions and the suspension of some of their basic human rights, if in return their basic material, psychological and emotional day to day needs are met, i. e. if they are treated reasonably and decently by their own society. They might even be willing to suspend their right to travel without having to get permission by the intelligence department or to turn on the TV and get something close to the truth. People are not willing to put up with an autocratic regime forever, though. Once they have reached a certain level of income, they demand more democratic participation. This lesson can be learned from countries like Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore.

To counter radicalism ...

If we do not find such a balance, the dangerous radicalization will continue. Between 1980 and 1995, we saw the expansion of a huge Islamist movement as a result of the crises affecting the region's societies. Osama Bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi were not born out of a vacuum. They and their kind were radicalized in Afghanistan, but they were first politicized in their own countries, in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. They came to fruition and "matured" politically in such peaceful places as Newark, New Jersey; Hamburg, Germany; and Leeds, England. There is a common responsibility for this problem, for which the common denominator is the existence of disenfranchised, marginalized young people in a vortex of needs and concerns that have not been met for decades.

... we need to guarantee the expression
of social and cultural identities ...

The solution lies in finding answers to the following challenges: First, how to guarantee the expression of social and cultural identities in a way that is acceptable to the populations themselves? Today, many social and cultural identities are suppressed by the tyranny of some kind of larger political identity.

Islam has not been able to find an answer to how to combine religion with social identity, national identity and good governance.

Khouri

Second, how can people, in particular young people, define their national identity and safeguard it against foreign influences? How can they safeguard their identity as Syrians or Jordanians or Moroccans or as Arabs from foreign predatory armies, for example?

The third challenge is to strike a balance between religion and secularism. For almost 30 years, we have had Islamist movements, without being able to find an answer to the question of how to combine religion with social identity, national identity and good governance. We need to find the answer rather quickly, because the Islamists, like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood, have become very popular and are, as you know, winning elections. One reason for this is that they give the impression that they are the only ones who respond to these crises and earnestly deal with human needs.

The fourth challenge is finding a balance between individual national sovereignty and interdependence in a globalized world in a manner that is both legitimate and effective. The international engagement in Lebanon has been widely considered as legitimate and effective, quite in contrast to what happened in Iraq.

The fifth challenge is finding a balance between personal and collective identities. What does it mean to be a citizen of an Arab country? They have not figured this out yet, despite all their searching: How can one have a proper balance between the state, the nation and the Islamic Umma, or whatever you want to call this transnational level?

This crisis of identity is a new phenomenon, because most people did not have national identities and thus did not see competing identities as a problem in earlier times. When the British author Arthur Ransom traveled in Europe during the first third of the 20th century, he asked people about their identity, whether they consider themselves Hungarians, Romanians or belonging to any other national identity. The answer was mostly the same: "We are locals, we live here". Stable national identities are mostly a product of the 20th century. Israel of course is a very specific case in that regard.

Finally, the challenge that transcends all others: How can the region and the rest of the world engage each other in the framework of a universally and consistently applied common standard of both law and morality? The biggest, most bitter complaint that you hear from people in the Middle East, especially in the Arab world,

...help people define their national identity ...

...find a balance between religion and secularism ...

...and between global interdependence and national sovereignty

Cooper

Khouri

How can we define a common standard of law and morality?

is the criticism of the West's, and the United States', double standards. I can not emphasize this enough—it is probably the single most consistent and powerful criticism of people in the region, because it is the most demeaning, the most degrading and ultimately, the most dehumanizing dimension of how people in the Arab world feel they are being treated by the Western world.

In fundamental issues like the implementation of UN resolutions, access to nuclear technology or torture, consistency is what matters to people in the Arab world. The valiant cry of the Islamists has always been justice, equality, and a sense of dignity, and in that they accurately reflect the discontent and the moral and political aspirations of a large number of people in the region.

I would like to conclude my remarks in a more hopeful tone, though. Today there is an opportunity, for the first time in almost a century, for the Arab world and the Western powers to engage one another in a win-win situation. Fundamentally, the vast majority of people in the Middle East, the Bush Administration and the European Union are all talking the same language, despite their usage of a different vocabulary for the same concepts. Call it freedom or democracy or human rights or sovereignty or dignity, in the end, we are all talking about the same thing. A stable society is based on individuals and collectives being treated fairly and not subjected to exploitative, expedient or whimsical double standards. In fact, we have already passed the first test: The way Lebanon and Syria were dealt with by Europeans, Americans and Arabs working together in the Security Council was an extraordinary success. The second test is going to be the Iranian nuclear issue, where even more is at stake.

McFaul

This is usually the moment for the clueless yet arrogant American expert who just flew in to start pontificating about a region he knows nothing about, so that the rest of the participants can gang up on him and feel good about it for the rest of the afternoon. I will not grant you that pleasure but will instead put forward a few very basic theses about democratization in general.

I believe we are still far from understanding what democratization is. Recently, I met the CEO of a major corporation doing reconstruction in Iraq. He asked me, as an expert and promoter of democratization: “Mike, when I go to Iraq to build a bridge, I have a blueprint and a set of engineers with me and this is why I can successfully build that bridge—so which blueprint for building democracy do you advocate?” But I had nothing to show him. We have no unified theory of democratization let alone a clear understanding of how to promote it abroad. If we

People in the Middle East share many Western goals—a potential win-win situation

We still do not understand democratization



do not understand the process of democratization, how can we hope to promote democratization in Iraq, or anywhere else in the world? Therefore I would like to identify together with you the few facts that we know because they stand the test of empirical falsification.

I want to challenge you by presenting three myths and three truisms regarding the relationship between development, democracy, security and stability. Being not an expert on the Middle East, but a political scientist who has been teaching a course on democratization for a long time I will present to you what is considered conventional wisdom by American social scientists. I will not talk about specific countries but ask you to tell me why, for example, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt do not fit my patterns, categories which are used to analyze all the other countries of the world. So let us see if you can prove to me that what I call myths are facts and what I call truisms are actually myths.

Let me start with the three myths. First: “Dictatorships grow faster than democracies”. This is a plain myth, the data do not support it. For every China, there is an Angola. Democratic regimes grow more slowly, but much more steadily. There is a very positive correlation between democratic and economic development, as you recently saw in the tremendous growth rates of the countries of the former Communist Bloc. Autocratic regimes do have an advantage in post-war reconstruction and in the development of heavy industries, but after that the growth rate of autocracies is lower than that of democracies. Africa is an exception which we cannot yet explain, maybe because there have not been enough cases of democratization on that continent.

This leads to the second myth that “economic development leads to democratization”. Stanford’s Seymour Martin Lipset proposed this thesis forty years ago. It is simply false, without any support from the data. The process of regime change from autocracy and dictatorship to democracy happens in many different forms. Sometimes it is triggered in connection with economic development, as you can see in South Korea and Taiwan. But sometimes democracies arise from the exact opposite—economic crisis. Sometimes democracy starts with the death of the dictator, sometimes it results from splits within the *ancien régime*, sometimes it is triggered by war, and sometimes by pressure from external powers. In our ongoing discussion about Iraq and other countries in the region, be careful not to expect democratization as a direct result of economic development. What we know, however, is that if there is already a transition to democracy going on, then it is much more likely to survive in a country with a GDP per capita of at least \$4,500.

Dictatorships do not grow faster than democracies

Economic development does not necessarily lead to democratization

Responsible politicians interested
in peace and stability for their country,
must favor democracy,
whether they believe in it or not.

McFaul



We also know of some correlations that we should bear in mind when dealing with specific countries, for instance, that it is easier to have a democratic transition in homogenous societies, that parliamentary democracies usually survive longer than presidential ones, and that the most extraordinary success in the area of consolidating democracy during the past 20 years was the EU's enlargement policy in Middle and Eastern Europe.

zu Guttenberg

What is your definition of a consolidated democracy, and what are the impacts of consolidation? Ironically, the EU, which you refer to as an ideal partner for democratic consolidation, has lately needed consolidation itself.

McFaul

Autocracies are not more stable
than democracies

As for the third and last myth, “autocratic regimes are more stable than democracies”: It is empirically proven that democracies, especially middle income democracies, are much more stable on average over time than autocracies. Democracies with a GDP per capita of less than \$ 1,000 are indeed highly unstable. But autocracies, on the other hand, often lack stability even if their GDP is noticeably greater than that—which holds true for more than half the countries in the region. One reason for the lack of stability of autocratic regimes is that they have no mechanism for handing over power. Another reason is that legitimacy for autocracies is based almost solely on performance, whether political or economic. Deriving legitimacy from Divine Right, a typical principle in the distant past, is a great exception these days and in no way creates a religiously motivated social stability; the Iranian society is the most secular one in the region, precisely because it does attempt to legitimate the government through God instead of economic performance. By and large, autocracies' legitimacy rises and falls with their performance, and this can be very destabilizing. Moreover, autocracies are much more likely than consolidated democracies to be involved in destabilizing conflicts with their neighbors.

Democracies do not wage war
against each other

Which leads to my first truism: “Consolidated democracies do not fight each other”, they are much better neighbors than autocracies. I challenge you to tell me when consolidated democracies went to war with each other in the last 200 years. If you are a responsible politician interested in peace and stability for your country, then you have to favor democracy as well, whether you believe in it or not, because it is useful.

Cooper

Democracies do not fight each other? What about the First World War? By the standards of the day, the German Kaiserreich was a democracy. Of course, it was

not a perfect one, but none of the other democracies in Europe were perfect, either. None of them had women's suffrage, for example, except for Finland which was not a state at that time but a Grand Duchy under the Russian Czar. To go back a little further, by the standards of the 17th century, Britain and the Netherlands were parliamentary regimes, if not democracies, and they fought each other three times during that century. Basically, I agree with your thesis, but the real world is, as usually, a little more complicated than the theory.

You of course have a point, the more you go back in history, the more potential counter-examples come to your mind—but still the data is strongly in favor of my first truism. By the way, most people actually do believe in democracy. Mr. Khouri rightly pointed to the fact that most people want to live under democratic rule. The data from the World Value Survey support his analysis of the mood in the region. When confronted with the Winston Churchill quote that democracy is “the worst form of government, except for all those others that have been tried,” the majority of people around the world agree.

Second truism: “Oil is bad for development and democracy”. The oil curse is a fact, as the data prove. Countries that have escaped it, Norway, Great Britain, and the United States, have done so precisely because they developed their political institutions before they discovered their oil resources. I admit that the region is handling the recent climb in oil prices rather impressively compared to the first two spikes in 1973 and 1979, which should give hope that the oil curse must not always have disastrous consequences. But as of today, I am more convinced of the opposite. For instance, 15 years ago Saudi Arabia had a GDP per capita of \$24,000, and today it is less than half this amount. Furthermore, the so-called Dutch disease—the crowding out of other parts of a national economy in favor of the oil sector—has infected not only Africa and some states of the former Soviet Union, but also this region. The fight for this resource tends to create unstable, autocratic regimes. In the October issue of the *Journal of Democracy*, I published an article under the title “Chinese Dreams, Persian Realities”, arguing that the Iranian mullahs’ strategy of emulating the Chinese model of economic development to stop democratic change is doomed to fail. Countries like Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia will not be able to implement Chinese policy after they have set up political institutions that are based on the rents of oil.

Third truism: “In the long run, democracies tend to reduce extremism and extremist elements in their societies”. This is based on the theory of the median

McFaul

Oil can negatively affect development

Democracies reduce extremism

voter, which means that in order to win elections over a longer period of time, you have to appeal to centrist voters. There is also a co-optation effect. Consider the Muslim Brotherhood, or Hamas. When faced with the decision whether to play by the rules or not, those that play by the rules tend to live a lot longer than those who try to remain outside democratic rules. Also, extremists' rise to power is usually the first step to their marginalization. In government, they tend to make mistakes, thus exposing their lack of quality as political leaders. Therefore it is unlikely that they will win several elections in a row. The problem is, though, that extremists do well in young democracies' elections, and that makes it hard to get to a stable democracy in which extremist forces will probably die out.

Personally, and this is based on intuition rather than empirical knowledge, I think that the danger of extremists coming to power and doing lots of damage is grossly exaggerated. My intuition is based solely on Algeria where we never saw a result of the Islamic Salvation Front's victory, because the military cancelled the elections, thus starting a civil war in which more than 100,000 civilians were killed. It is usually much better to let the process play out. The other case that always comes up in this regard, the example of Weimar Germany, is a specific case to such an extent that generalizing it constitutes a gross misuse of history.

Of course, the rise of democracy will not automatically lead to the extinction of extremism. Such a view is ahistorical. Extremists in the United States are a good example—such minorities exist in almost every society. The question is, can you provide a place, like for example the remote state of Montana, where they can live on the margins of society with their strange ideas and big guns without being a permanent potential threat to society? Of course, individuals like the Oklahoma bomber show that even that will not eliminate the danger arising from extremism completely.

Democratization needs
a secure neighborhood

Finally, I would like to make a point which I still hesitate to classify as either a myth or a truism: security leads to democracy. In Iraq, this is an obvious truism. Without security there is obviously no hope for democracy. But we tend to forget the regional perspective, the necessity of a secure neighborhood as a prerequisite for a democratic transition. For the post-Communist world along the borders of the European Union, the EU provided the ideal neighbor in consolidating democratization. Already for Georgia or Kyrgyzstan, where the neighborhood is a little nastier, democratic transition seems to be harder. In the short run, it may be possible to succeed in a disadvantaged neighborhood, but what about the long run?

I wonder how Iraq's neighborhood will influence its chances to consolidate its democratization process.

You doubt that security can lead to democracy? Imagine a region that had sectarian and interstate wars, weak states next to strong, ill-defined borders, rich countries next to poor, anti-democratic parties winning elections in barely democratized places, demographic problems, radicalized youth, irresponsible elites, and to make things even worse, US forces occupying parts of this region. That is—not the Middle East, but Europe after the Second World War. Back then, two treaties brought a much needed secure framework: NATO and the European Coal and Steel Community, the core element of what is now the EU.

1. Economy and the State

Mr. McFaul, your truism “oil is bad for development” is correct indeed, as one can see in my country. Iran has a three thousand year old tradition as an organized state with a mostly powerful and predominant central government. Today, almost a century after the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–06, a little over 50 years after the popular national movement in the early 1950s to nationalize the oil industry that ended with the CIA-engineered military coup against Prime Minister Mossadegh, and less than three decades after the Shah was overthrown in 1979, a civil society with well-established political parties and other institutionalized instruments of participation has still not developed in the country. In fact, this glaring lack has rendered politics and political achievements reversible in Iran—as political developments in the country in recent years have demonstrated.

Why is that? Most intellectuals in Iran blame the lack of an influential middle class based in a strong private sector for the state of our civil society and politics that leave much to be desired. This could, among others, be ascribed in large measure, to the historical preponderance of the state—a powerful central government—and in modern Iran and more specifically in recent decades to the emergence and consolidation of a rentier state as a result of oil revenues. The Iranian state is dominant because of its almost total financial autonomy from the society and its internal dynamism. Contrary to the historical experience in the Occident, where political participation and state reliance on taxation were closely linked, the continuity of an autonomous, preponderant state in Iran has not been conducive to participation. The dominance of the state in Iran, to reiterate, is not just a recent phenomenon, and cannot be wished away just like that.

Asadi

Iran lacks a vibrant civil society ...

... because oil revenues make the state financially independent



We in Iran need to have a robust, dynamic civil society, and to that end, we need to strengthen the private sector in the national economy.

Cooper

In spite of the rentier state problem, Iran may become a democracy soon

In spite of the rentier state problem, I would not despair of Iran becoming a democracy, because enough educated people who desire a sense of self-worth can overcome formidable obstacles. There is something a bit too Marxist about the idea “no democracy for oil producers”.

The phenomenon of the rentier state has existed long before oil acquired its present-day importance. Acquiring silver and gold in South America since the 16th century was a major disaster for Spain that lost its status as the most advanced society in Europe in the 17th century to a bunch of good-for-nothings in the Netherlands who had neither colonies nor natural resources and did nothing but trade.

Dubai is a very specific and most interesting example of a rentier economy without natural resources. Nobody pays tax here, because the government has found ways of generating revenue without oil and taxation—a sort of modern miracle. As I strongly believe in the reverse of the dictum “no taxation without representation”, i.e. “no representation without taxation”, I wonder what the future of Dubai will be. But then, the world is full of exceptions, and the paths which people take are very unpredictable.

Perthes

Rent-seeking is a creative business. When running out of oil, autocratic rulers have to look for alternatives to avoid the political risks coming with taxation. This is probably one of the reasons why Dubai is so open to money laundering.

Perkovich

The rentier states in the region suffering from the Dutch Disease have done relatively well in recent decades and are actually better off than those without oil, which highlights just how problematic the economic situation is overall in the arab world.

Perthes

Should the general relationship between state and economy in the region, and especially in Iran, be changed? Mr. Asadi, you mentioned the rentier state problem within that larger context, would you please elaborate on the question of state-owned vs. private business?

Asadi

Each country must find its own way to meet the challenges of a globalized world market. But some sort of independent private sector must always be part of the



answer, as well as the government's ability to autonomously set a legal framework for its national market, in spite of growing international trade and multilateral rule-setting.

In Iran, a process of privatization started after the Iran-Iraq war, at the beginning of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency. That process, which seemed to be promising in the beginning, unfortunate as it is, soon was devoid of its initial aims and objectives and led to the emergence of a second tier the rentiers; most of the formerly state-owned enterprises were practically auctioned off to a few close, loyal hands.

Are there plans to privatize the oil reserves? Because that is where the money lies.

The oil reserves were not included in the privatization plans. Moreover, I doubt that the oil sector in Iran could be considered for privatization any time soon. The point is not that, rather, we should be able to spend the oil revenues better and in a more economic and productive manner. We should, gradually at least, be able to take distance from a rentier state mentality and policy.

Privatization is important for Iran because it decreases the role of the state. That will be a precondition for democratization in my country. While I am not in favor of privatization as in the US and I do not worship the gods of privatization and economic efficiency, Iran does indeed need a leaner state because only then will democracy have room to grow.

Bonyads can and should be privatized, because neither the state nor the clerical establishment should control a large portion of the country's economy. The privatization of the bonyads is possible, simply through the sale of shares of the respective companies.

Privatization of the oil industry and oil reserves is a fundamentally different thing. Oil belongs to the state and should not be sold to the private sector, under whatever regime. We have to think about other solutions, like managing the oil revenues through an independently-controlled fund.

We must also address the question of these large and powerful parastatal foundations—mostly post-1979 entities—which have very strong ties to various segments of the clerical establishment. They control a sizeable part of the Iranian economy, and worse still, they are not part of the official public sector and operate outside the state budget. Hence, such powerful, unaccountable institutions cannot

In Iran, a few wealthy rentiers took over most formerly state owned enterprises

Cooper

Asadi

Hadian

Iran needs a leaner state,
and Bonyads must be privatized ...

... but the oil belongs to the state

Asadi

A major economic task for all governments in the region is job creation.

Perkovich



be considered conducive to long-term economic development of the country. Well, if we were to consider privatization in earnest, they cannot be excluded—as they have been in the past.

Kahwaji

A state-controlled economy is a major obstacle to democratization

State-controlled economy, which in the region means that economic assets belong to the ruling families, is a major obstacle to democratisation. Due to their great wealth stemming from the rule over the national resources and economy, the ruling sheiks have an almost boundless ability to bribe their people. Some leaders in the Middle East occasionally lower taxes, or raise salaries in the public sector, thus sharing a small proportion of their wealth in order to ensure public support in return.

But privatization in the region is not always what it seems. If you investigate who actually owns newly-privatized companies, you will find that they are owned by the rulers themselves. Privatization has been another way for the rulers and the leaders to tax the people privately, without the need for public approval, which would eventually lead to democratization.

McFaul

Peaceful transitions often hide nasty secrets ...

... because to give up power, the elites need incentives

Non-democratic elites will support democratization if they are compensated. You want an evolutionary change rather than a revolutionary one? Be prepared to reward the autocrats and their administration. In all peaceful transitions from autocratic regimes to democracies there are hidden nasty little secrets.

Whether in Chile in 1988, Poland in 1989, or South Africa in 1990, the elites did not give up power for nothing. The emerging democracies allowed them to privatize their property rights granted by the ancient regimes. That is of course grossly unfair in terms of equal rights and will create dissatisfaction in the future (as you can already see in South Africa), but that is how it works. This is not about justice but about peaceful transition. Is Spain after the death of Franco not preferable to Iran after the expulsion of the Shah? In Ukraine, both Rinat Akhmetov and Viktor Pinchuk, the richest businessmen in the country with extremely strong connections to the old regime, are still enormously wealthy, even though Pinchuk had to give back two companies acquired in dubious privatizations. When a Ukrainian politician recently showed me a list of weapons confiscated from Pinchuk's men, I said: Great, when is he going to jail, but he replied: We will not put him to jail because that would be too disruptive, we just want to demilitarize him. Bastards like Pinchuk—excuse my wording—will be allowed to retain their wealth and transform into respectable politicians as a trade off for their assistance in open-

Is the huge number of young people a chance or a challenge?

Hoffmann



ing up the system. If you want a peaceful transition, instead of hoping for elites to simply abdicate their power and wealth, have some incentives prepared.

A major economic task for all governments in the region is job creation. Since the 1990s, i. e. after the end of the Cold War, two billion new people joined the unified global labor market. Both China and India were cut off from that global supply chain due to the divided world economy. Nowadays, as you can see here in Dubai, Indians are already dominating the market for cheap manual labor. What is the strategy of governments within and outside the region for dealing with this challenge of job creation for indigenous populations. This question concerns both the wealthiest countries of the region as well as the poorer ones, which are already facing unemployed masses of mostly younger people.

Mr. Reissner, you are working on Islamist discourses—is the question of how to get young people into the workforce and to participate in the democratic process being discussed by the new Islamists? Or is their discourse still only a moral one, sticking to justice and Islam being the solution?

These questions are discussed, of course with a strong moral undertone and always in connection with the demand for justice.

Regarding labor markets, there is a growing regional discrepancy. After September 11, 2001, large amounts of Arab capital were withdrawn from Western bank accounts because of the new regulations imposed on money transfers in the course of the so-called war on terror. A lot of this money was reinvested in the Gulf region. The results, reinforced by the soaring oil prices, are visible everywhere around the Gulf—for example in the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait. That widens the already existing gap between the wealthy Gulf states and their neighbors suffering from high unemployment rates and the inability to meet basic human needs. In the end, this will undermine the basis for reforms and destabilize the whole region.

The demographic conditions of the region, the huge numbers of young people, can be seen as a chance or as a challenge. Not long ago, almost every article about Iran ended with the optimistic forecast that Iran's future was bright because the country's overwhelming number of well-educated, politically sensitive young people could no longer be ignored. But do we know for sure that young people

Perkovich

Job creation is more difficult since China and India rejoined world markets

Perthes

Reissner

Kahwaji

The gap between wealthy Gulf states and their poor neighbors will destabilize the region

Hoffmann

Demographics can be a chance or a challenge

in Iran are not a time bomb because of their frustrated attempts to satisfy their material needs? Do we know for sure that they are not already radicalized and a grave threat to stability? What makes us so sure that the inevitable change will put Iran on a path that will be desirable for the West?

2. Models and Obstacles for Political Reform

Perthes Can the region repeat Europe's democratization process or are conditions too different?

Asadi The historical experience of the West cannot be repeated, because we live in a different world with different parameters. Therefore, we have to find our own path to long-term development, as difficult as this might be.

Hadian The countries of the region are not only different, they are unique. One can of course learn from general prescriptions and historical examples, but in the end each country is determined by an individual set of characteristics.
This region's countries are not only different, but unique

Perthes Mr. Cooper, is Europe's path to modernity in the 20th century, or from the 19th century or even from the Renaissance onward, different from the development in this region?

Cooper Of course—you hinted at the difference yourself when you asked about the 20th, then about the 19th century and then about the Renaissance. What took place in Europe was a very slow process—inventing something and putting it into practice in a trial and error procedure always takes time. The difference between democratization in Europe and other parts of the world is indeed the speed.
Democratization in Europe took centuries

Polenz Of course conditions here differ from Europe, and our friends in the region have with good reasons repeatedly insisted on self-determination. Indeed, all people should have the right to choose their own model of democracy, participation and rule of law. But that does not mean that all models are equally good. There are commonly accepted universal standards—of human rights, for instance, against which we can and should measure individual countries. Achievements can also be compared with what has been achieved in other regions. One such benchmark could be the degree of education in a country or the distribution of wealth and poverty.

How are the conditions for introducing democracy—is the region ready?

In the Arab world, even countries that have an old parliamentary system, Lebanon for example, lack an adequate electoral law that ensures representation. Every new attempt to create a new election law up to now has served those in power, not the people. As a Sunni from the Lebanese city of Tyre, I cannot run for elections, because Tyre and the surrounding region of South Lebanon do not have a seat for a Sunni. There are similar problems in Iraq. The lack of proportional representation offering security to the minorities as well as to the majorities in the region is one of the reasons for the poisoned relationships between the different groups in Iraq.

Five things hinder democratization in the region and in Iraq: demography, Islamic traditions, irresponsible elites, dependent people, and the neighborhood.

First, demographic changes affect democratic practices: In Lebanon, the people feel threatened by a growing Shia majority, in Jordan by a Palestinian majority. The ruling elites, often belonging to the minority, react with electoral laws that violate the fundamental democratic principle of one man, one vote. The Iraqi city of Kirkuk is claimed by Kurds, and Arabs alike—the Kurds are even offering incentives to Kurds to move to Kirkuk in order to outnumber other ethnic groups.

Second, Islam has indeed certain undemocratic traditions. During the last elections in Iran, the middle echelon of the Islamic clergy heavily influenced people's votes. The right to vote as an individual, and not as part of a flock, was greatly disrespected.

Third, until now, our elites have been power-grabbers. They have to learn to share power. This will not be easy in the short run, but there are traditional values supporting the idea of power-sharing as the best way to rule a country, even if this means that democratic principles are implemented only gradually.

In the Arab world, the opposition is often worse than the government. There was a homegrown opposition in Iraq until the 1950s, but later on the communists with their ties to Moscow and the nationalists with their ties to Nasser were not a true indigenous democratic opposition but influenced by foreign interests.

Fourth, in Iraq the nationalization of industries and the agricultural reform after the revolution of 1958 eliminated the independence of the middle and the lower classes. It became customary to live on state support. After the fall of Saddam, Iraqis depend on whomever is willing to support them, thus allowing loyalties to be bought, regardless of political inclinations—as in the Arabic prov-

Perthes

Kahwaji

We need propoportional representation

Atiyah

Our elites are power-grabbers

Democracies tend to grow in an atmosphere of security.

Cooper



Iraq has difficult neighbors:
Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria

erb “Whoever gets my mother, I will call him my uncle.” Building democracy is hard under these circumstances.

Fifth, Mr. McFaul was right to point out the importance of the neighborhood. Without doubt, Eastern Europe benefits from its Western European neighbors. Unfortunately, Iraq adjoins to Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Syria.

Cooper

Democracies tend to grow in an atmosphere of security. NATO played an important role in providing a secure neighborhood in postwar Europe.

Another important example of the value of a good neighborhood is Japan. Although nobody in Asia will admit it, Japanese success as an economic-driven democracy has been a very powerful motivation for similar developments throughout the region.

Copying is a common process in history

Copying is a very common process in history; Europe’s models were Rome and Greece, Venice was copied by the Netherlands and the Netherlands themselves were copied by Britain. Then Britain was copied by the United States which referred to Montesquieu, who actually misunderstood what was happening in Britain.

Hadian

Democracy in Iran will come about only when a certain level has been reached in the areas of society, culture, polity and help from the international community.

Iranian society is, as Mr. Cooper said, very much ready for democracy. There is an expanded and educated middle class that organizes itself in strong (although state-controlled) civil society institutions.

Culture is not decisive for democratization

Culture, in contrast, is a very mixed bag. I doubt that we can claim a well-developed democratic culture or a culture that is very favorable for democracy. But I personally do not think that culture, important as it is, will be the decisive factor. Fortunately, culture can change rather quickly.

The most important obstacle to democratization is the state of Iran’s polity. Iranian politics are determined by rival factions and parties competing for power without adequate regulation by commonly accepted norms and rules and therefore with unpredictable results. As long as our oil spares the state from the need to extract revenues from the citizens, Iran’s polity will lack transparency and accountability. The discourse about the rule of law among intellectuals in Iran is therefore mainly about rules for the political process, about political competition and constitutional participation. Those in power prefer to mention the rule of law only with regard to society.

Iranian society is very much ready for democracy.

Hadian



The plurality of power centers in Iran results from complex structures as envisioned in the post-revolutionary Constitution. While such a plurality has proved cumbersome, it has nevertheless provided some sort of a system of checks and balances and militated, in actuality, against emergence of monolithic structures.

It seems to be common knowledge that Iran is “the most secular society” in the region. What makes us so sure about that and what does it actually mean, “the most secular society”? What are the criteria and what is the empirical proof? The number of young people who like to party? The decreasing number of people who pray regularly?

I have experienced Iran as a deeply split society with a major part of it still living in a traditional way with religion playing a decisive role in people’s lives. I suspect that secularism according to the French tradition or the Turkish model would find few supporters in Iran. Support for a milder form of secularism like the one we have in Germany would probably still be confined to the upper and upper middle class urban population.

Iran’s society is secular even though it is religious—secularism is not about the absence of faith but about how state and society are organized. Secularization in Iran has three aspects: First, daily life in Iran is becoming increasingly conventional—moving from the sacred to the profane. Second, religion is more and more relegated to the private sphere. During Muharram, an important month in the Shia tradition with marches where men beat themselves in memory of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, participants now gather less and less in state-controlled mosques after the marches, preferring privately organized places instead. Third, many people are in favor of separating the institutions of religion and state.

If Iran is so secular, was Ahmadinejad elected only for economic reasons or was the election fraudulent?

Ahmadinejad was elected for his simple attire, unpolished style, and down-to-earth approach. This distinguished him from Rafsanjani in the eyes of the ordinary people in Iran. It should be pointed out that when people had several choices Ahmadinejad only collected 5.7 million votes in the first ballot of the Election. In the second ballot when he competed with the former President Rafsanjani

Asadi

Hoffmann

If Iran really is the region’s most secular country...

Hadian

Hoffmann

... then why did the Iranians elect Ahmadinejad?

Hadian

Ahmadinejad only got 5,7 million votes



he won the Election by a wide margin. However his election does not by any stretch of the imagination mean that Iran is shifting towards a revolutionary ideology.

3. Can Outside Pressure Trigger Reform?

Perthes Can democratization be triggered from outside, Mr. Löning?

Löning

In the 1960s, everybody believed
in Africa's future ...

It was common sense in the international development aid community in the 1960s that the future belonged to Africa, while Asia would stay poor forever. As you know, the opposite happened. What brought about the boom in Asia?

Apart from many different elements like market economy and rule of law, I see one key element—a deliberate decision by responsible national elites to develop their respective countries. That happened in Vietnam in the 1980s, for example, and it happened in South Korea, Taiwan, and India.

... but foreign aid and experts are
useless without responsible elites

Foreign aid and experts cannot trigger development without such decision. Western countries wasted a great amount of money (Germany, for example, spent more than the equivalent of one billion euro in India alone), until they finally realized it was to no avail. Are there responsible elites in the Middle East that have decided or will decide to develop their countries?

McFaul Foreign experts and money made a big difference in Asia. Security provided by the United States was a precondition for development in South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Cooper

Dominant foreign adversaries can be
incentives for developing one's country

Outside influence has been decisive for the development of certain countries, though sometimes in a perverse way. The humiliation of the Japanese by the USA and the West, their treatment as a second-class people, made the Japanese elites decide at the end of the 19th century that they would develop their country so they would be able to stand face to face to the West. It was China's rise to a superpower that knocked India out of its self-satisfaction.

An important stimulus for democratization may be a polytheistic religion. It is hardly a coincidence that both Greece and Rome had the religious image of gods quarrelling in the heavens. Perhaps democracy works in India because Hinduism is better-suited to democracy than Islam, for example in Pakistan.

The USA plays a negative role with regard to democratization in Iran, probably unintentionally. In a decade of sanctions supposed to curb Iranian weapons of mass destruction, support for terrorism and opposition to the Middle East peace process, nothing has been gained. In terms of WMD, Iran made progress, in terms of terrorism we are at the top of the State Department's list of rogue states, and we are still vehemently opposed to the peace process. What you have achieved is that the domestic situation in Iran has become securitized. A number of my colleagues ended up in prison for apparently accepting American money, which the US Congress promised but never actually paid out. These policies hurt the democratic movement in Iran. More helpful for the support of democracy is the spread of universally-accepted values through globalization, which has strong domestic implications in Iran.

Hadian

US-funded NGOs were quite helpful in Lebanon. Their representatives flew to Ukraine and brought their fresh experience of a peaceful transition to Lebanon.

McFaul

Let us now define a work program. What do we expect from the elites, the ruling families, the middle classes—and the foreign experts, Americans as well as others? What are their most important tasks and duties in the immediate future?

Perthes

I hate to tell you, but regimes in the region are entrenched and corrupt and have only one priority: staying in power. You cannot hope that they will make decisions in their countries' best interests.

Kahwaji

To stay in power ...

Regional autocrats will always be prepared to converse about reform with the Western governments as long as they and their children can be sure of retaining their power and wealth. They will be prepared to discuss democracy as long as they can be sure they will not be threatened by real democracy. Because people in the region know that, Western negotiations with the regimes undermine the United States' and Europe's credibility.

... the regional autocrats will even discuss democracy with Western experts

This region is not Asia. There will be no regime change, and there will be no democratization, as long as the current regimes control their nations' wealth and security apparatus and are considered legitimate by the international community.

My list would be: control over the military police, the economy and the financial sector and the information market. International recognition is not the decisive factor.

Khouri

When promoting democracy, the West must be more consistent than hitherto.

Hollis

Kahwaji
The West should support regime change—like in Ukraine

Therefore, Europe and the United States should support regime change from within. As during the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, the West must encourage the free media, the opposition and civil rights activists as much as possible.

Partnerships could be an effective means of encouraging change through incentives. Collaboration between NATO and the national military on defense reform can further the separation of military and civilian or state structures, which would in turn deprive the autocratic regimes of an important pillar of their power.

In the economic area, reducing the influence of lobby groups which cater to their specific interests would be very helpful. Lobbyists are the advocates of autocratic leaders in the West, because the autocrats are important business partners for Western firms.

Regional autocrats tend to use privatization to channel the national wealth to their families. The West must not allow this to go through. Western partnerships, be it the ENP's action plans or papers in the framework of the Barcelona Process, should always include guidelines detailing how privatization and economic reforms are to be handled. That will further weaken the regimes's hold on power and empower the people.

Cooper

The so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine was not really a revolution, but a part of a so-far-peaceful transition, an election was fixed in the aftermath. I do not think that the disappearance of the House of Saud, for example, would be quite that peaceful and easy to manage. Real revolutions bring forth chaos and destruction.

Khoury
The Orange Revolution had a big impact on the Middle East

Whatever it was that happened in Ukraine, a revolution or a transition, it had a tremendous impact on the Middle East, in particular on Lebanon. They saw the Orange Revolution on TV and copied techniques of the Ukrainian protesters: the scarves and the music groups for example. Another source of inspiration came from the Palestinian Intifada, namely the slogan "Intifada of Independence" they used for their movement against Syrian occupation.

Perthes

The astonishing and encouraging thing about Lebanon is that a public prosecutor and a popular movement managed to bring about the peaceful demise of authoritarianism, without any military coup or foreign intervention.



It is impossible to solve all the region's problems simultaneously, not the least because men like the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, know all the tricks of staying in power from decades of experience.

But one good example could make a start. Europe and the United States should engage Lebanon to manage the breakthrough. It would have the same impact on the Arab world as Solidarity in Poland had on the Soviet Bloc in the 1980s. What the region needs most is accountability. Lebanon could become the one example, the one success story we need where a society holds its elites accountable, builds the rule of law through an independent judiciary and finds commonly accepted ways of participation.

One of the main reasons why many of the regimes and autocrats in the region have remained in power so long is that they have consistently managed to play off one foreign power against another. We must ensure that it is no longer possible to play this game with the Europeans, the Americans or the Chinese?

Should there be a work program for the opposition too, Mr. Atiyah? You said that some opposition groups are worse than the governments.

The Europeans and Americans should make it clear to the opposition groups that if they want to be an alternative to the existing government, they have to abide by certain rules. That would help to encourage a more mature Arab opposition.

When promoting democracy, the West must be more consistent than hitherto. Europe and the US tend to want democracy as an instrument for delivering certain outcomes, whereas real democracy is establishing institutions and processes and respecting the outcome. Europe is extremely nervous because many Palestinians will likely vote for Hamas. But if certain parts of the Palestinian electorate use their democratic rights to elect Islamists—Islamists represent a part of the population—it would not be democratic to object.

The EU has recognized Hamas as a legitimate participant in the elections—the US will not even speak to them.

There is a big debate in the United States, even in the Bush administration, as to how to deal with Islamist groups. Hamas is of course a very delicate issue. If they

Khouri

Men like Hosni Mubarak know all the tricks to retain power ...

Reissner

Perthes

Atiyah

Hollis

If the West wants real democracy, it must respect the outcome of free elections

Cooper

McFaul

get into local governments in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, they get access to multi-million dollar USAID-sponsored programs, including those for technical assistance and food relief. Should that make us happy? I doubt it. Americans will not tolerate that their support is used to subsidize the activities of a terrorist organization.

Perthes

During the presidential election in Palestine, Europe successfully pressured Marwan Barghouti to withdraw his candidature. The EU wanted to assure a particular outcome which had already been negotiated with the Americans and the Israelis: that Mahmoud Abbas would become Palestinian President.

Khoury

The Islamists seemingly do care for the ordinary people—just like Martin Luther King or Desmond Tutu

The Islamists are the ones who are perceived as paying attention to the problems of the ordinary people. This is why they got so much support during the past decades. They do exactly what religious movements are supposed to do—think of Reverend Martin Luther King’s role in the US civil rights movement of Bishop Desmond Tutu as a leader of the anti-Apartheid movement, in South Africa, or of Cardinal Jaime Sin’s role for democratization in the Philippines. Faith gives hope, courage and strength—all the things needed to overcome oppression.

III. Security Challenges

We will now concentrate on the risks, threats, and security challenges in the region and on how regional and international actors should tackle them.

Hossein Mousavian, Advisor to the National Security Secretary of the Islamic Republic of Iran and former head of Iran's nuclear negotiation team, will analyze the situation from the perspective of the biggest country in the region, Iran. He will also explain his views on Iran's nuclear program that is seen by many as a major security threat itself.

Our second speaker, Robert Cooper, Director General for Politico-Military Affairs at the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU is not only one of the EU's most senior diplomats. he has also acquired a reputation as a leading conceptual thinker with important books like his analysis of the international system after the end of the Cold War "The Breaking of Nations".

I see ten major challenges to this region's security:

The countries of the Middle Eastern and the North African region, especially those of the Persian Gulf, are among the most heavily armed in the world. Instead of investing their petro-dollars in economic development, they import large quantities of military equipment.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the brutal policy of the Israeli government threaten both regional and international stability. Furthermore, the unwillingness of the United States to use its influence on Israel to resolve the conflict undermines the legitimacy of its Arab allies and strengthens Islamic fundamentalism.

Terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are serious threats to regional and international security. The American war on terror combined with the United States' support for Israel is counterproductive: The consecutive invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are increasingly being interpreted as a Jewish-Christian war against Islam in the region, which increases support for Al-Qaeda.

The willingness of the US to use force as a legitimate means for regime change in various Arab countries endangers regional and global security. The invasion and reconstruction of Iraq is not seen as an exception, but as a precedent that can be replicated elsewhere if needed.

American unilateralism and its implications for how transformations in the Arab world and Iran are to be triggered from the outside challenge the long-term stability of this region. This unilateralism is rooted deeply in American foreign policy, because while neo-cons talk about empire and American primacy, neoliberals just use other words when they call for leadership by the United States.

Perthes

Mousavian

People in the region believe there is a Jewish-Christian war against Islam

Unilateralism is deeply rooted within American policy

The invasion of Iraq can be replicated elsewhere if needed.

Mousavian



The present security strategy is financially unsustainable because the costs both for the US and the GCC states are too high. Instead, we need a framework of regional collaboration for security, stability and peace.

The West applies double standards concerning weapons of mass destruction. Israel, Pakistan and India possess a wide range of these weapons and refuse to sign, ratify and implement the international WMD conventions. Nevertheless, the US, the EU and other important members of the international community like China and Russia compete for strategic relations with these countries.

No country in the region apart from Iran is taking serious measures against drug smuggling even though these drugs have devastating effects also in the EU. As a result, Iran is threatened by narco-terrorism without any support from its neighbors or the international community.

Iran follows four guidelines in its policy towards Iraq: Territorial integrity, internal stability, a strong central government and the participation of all ethnic and religious groups (mainly the Shia, the Sunni, and the Kurds). These are also the main factors for the region's security.

The US and other Western countries' military presence in the Persian Gulf, Central Asia and the Caucasus region is threatening Iran and destabilizing the whole region by stirring up ethnic conflicts and influencing domestic policies.

Cooper

The European Security Strategy identifies a number of threats to Europe, namely weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, failed states and organized crime. In a way, this list of threats demonstrates just how secure Europe is at the moment:

Weapons of mass destruction are a rather remote threat, organized crime and failed states happen at the worst around our borders, but more likely further away, and we are getting on top of the problem in the Balkans.

Regarding terrorism, of course there have been horrible terrorist attacks, the most spectacular of which were the attacks of 9/11 that killed nearly 3,000 people. On the average day during the Second World War 17,000 people died and World War II lasted six years. It is therefore justified to say that we live in an extraordinarily secure environment measured on a historical scale.

In the Middle East, all these threats—failing states, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, organized crime—are clear and present dangers. Looking at the beach and the sea outside you might have the impression that today is a nice day in a nice place, but there are good reasons to be fearful. There is no potentially more dangerous area in the world.

Territorial integrity, internal stability, strong central governments and participation are essential for the region's security

Measured on a historical scale, Europe is extraordinarily secure at the moment ...

... whereas the Middle East is potentially the world's most dangerous region



As to failing states, there are several candidates, most notably Iraq. Success there can be achieved only in the long run, and we are still far from that. I cannot help recalling, without pleasure, winding up accidentally on a television program in which Richard Perle told me, “Iraq will be a democracy in six months”. “But we have been in Bosnia for seven or eight years, and we are making progress, but there is no stable democracy yet,” I replied. He insisted that “No, no, there was a civil war in Bosnia and Iraq is totally different.”

But maybe in the long run the American strategy will work out and Iraq will become the Arab version of the American dream: a stable, freedom-loving democratic country, where all minorities are included in the political process. The American administration hopes that this example will destabilize the autocratic governments in the region. If Iraq becomes a stable country, it will also help in stabilizing the region.

As to terrorism, it might be an exaggeration to say that it is a part of the normal way of life of the governments here. But many governments in the region are indeed involved in terrorism, as financiers or through logistical support.

On the other hand, major countries like Saudi Arabia are seriously threatened by fundamentalist terrorism. Remember that just a couple of years ago, there seemed to be a bombing or kidnapping in Saudi Arabia every week. Whether the government has now found a way to control the situation and is on a path to becoming stable and legitimate in the long run, we just do not know. But there may still be enormous risks in Saudi Arabia.

Weapons of mass destruction have been high on the agenda ever since Saddam used gas in the Iran-Iraq war. The alleged existence of Iraqi WMD was the main reason for the US-led invasion in Iraq; today the Iranian nuclear program dominates threat analyses.

Apart from failing states, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, the Gulf region is the only place in today’s world where a good honest interstate war, an invasion by military force to capture territory, would make any sense. If the Japanese invaded, say, Singapore again, they would hurt Japanese businesses there. But in the Gulf region, territory itself is valuable because of its natural resources.

Let me now come to the Iranian nuclear program. With all respect to our Iranian friends, it is difficult to believe that Iran’s nuclear aspirations are peaceful. A peaceful nuclear program starts with building power stations and only later turns to the production of the radioactive material to run them. To start with radioactive material without yet having any working power stations and to start

In the long run, Iraq might become the Arab version of the American dream

Many Middle Eastern governments are involved in terrorism

In the Gulf region, old-fashioned interstate wars still make sense

Iran’s nuclear program has “nuclear weapons” written all over it

Although it may seem different to Iranians,
Iran actually is a naturally
secure country in many ways.

Cooper

A naturally secure country like Iran
does not need nuclear weapons

with a heavy water reactor and centrifuges—using technology borrowed from the former head of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program, Abdul Qadeer Khan (not especially famous for his power plants), and to furthermore experiment with polonium, which is used to detonate atomic bombs—such a program has “nuclear weapons” written all over it in capital letters.

To act in that way would be, again with all due respect, a spectacularly stupid thing to do. Although it may seem different to Iranians, Iran actually is a naturally secure country in many ways. If such a naturally secure country wished to bring a threat upon itself, a good way to do so would be to make people think you want to acquire nuclear weapons. First, that would attract the attention of the USA and second it might persuade others in the region that they also need nuclear weapons. India has not become more secure by having nuclear weapons; on the contrary, it lost its natural security advantage over Pakistan, because it has persuaded Pakistan to get nuclear weapons.

There are others here at the table, most notably Mr. Mousavian and Mr. McFaul, who know even more about the different efforts being made to negotiate on this subject, and I am still profoundly hopeful that they will be successful.

But if they are not and the Iranian government, which does not seem to show enormous sensitivity to global opinions at the moment, goes ahead with this, then what will happen?

A possible scenario would be that all countries in the region decide that they need nuclear weapons, too. The Saudis could buy them from Pakistan, for example, and Syria, Egypt and others could not fail to conclude that it is just not safe not to have nuclear weapons.

Containment of Iran is not
a very attractive option

The second option would be a policy of containment. That would require an even more comprehensive, deeper involvement of the US in the region. An organization like NATO would have to be devised for the region, with a sort of US tripwire around Iran, and with a strong, permanent US presence in the region. That does not strike me as being particularly stabilizing, either, and while the involvement of the Europeans might help, it still would not make that option very attractive.

Regional governments
need to be more active

This rather bleak outlook makes me wonder why governments in the region are not working much more actively to find ways out of this quagmire. Politicians here should worry much, much more and need to stop being passive.

Kahwaji

They are not passive, but a bit more discreet about their concerns and intentions, not the least because of cultural habits. They prefer to do things behind closed

Foreign troops are a part of the problem, but they are also an inevitable part of the solution.



Hollis

doors instead of communicating through the media, and they do not want to scare off global investors. Investments in Dubai and Qatar are built on the confidence that the region is secure and stable.

The Gulf states are actively developing a strategy given the possibility of a nuclear arms race initiated by the Iranians. Just a few days ago, the Secretary-General of the GCC made very clear statements about the potentially destabilizing consequences Iran's nuclear program would bring to the whole region.

The UAE is not passive in the face of the threat from Iran. On the contrary, Iranian nuclear ambitions are the most important topic in foreign policy debates. Iran is traditionally the powerful neighbor to worry about, comparable to what the Soviet Union used to be for Germany and its Bundeswehr. In recent years, its growing defense budget, nuclear ambitions and lack of transparent policy have increased these worries.

I still think that the governments in the region are too passive, and as to their being discreet, I sometimes wish there would be more discretion, for instance, towards Israel.

Mr. Mousavian said that Israel's policy and the United States' support for Israel undermine regional stability. Do you agree, Mr. Schaefer?

The chicken-and-egg-game about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will lead nowhere. Regional actors blame the United States for the current situation and conclude that the US ought to find a solution, too. But even though the Americans play of course an important role, there can be no solution as long as regional players call the existence of Israel into question. A two-state solution in which Israel and Palestine can exist side by side in peace is the only way.

Is Mr. Mousavian correct in stating that foreign armies destabilize the region?

Foreign troops are a part of the problem, but they are also an inevitable part of the solution. For at least a decade, the Americans have bolstered the defenses of the GCC states and supplied them with weapons. Yet these states are still unable to defend themselves.

The Gulf States are discreet because they do not want to scare off global investors

Steltzer

Iran is for the UAE what the USSR was for Germany during the Cold War

zu Guttenberg

Perthes

Schaefer

The chicken-and-egg-game about the responsibility for the Israel-Palestine conflict leads to nowhere

Perthes

Hollis

Foreign troops are part of the problem as well as part of the solution

Foreign troops produce new insecurities.

Khouri



If the US troops withdrew, the GCC states would soon ask for their return

In effect, the United States has become a local as well as an external actor in this region and will remain so in the foreseeable future. This was pointed out in the 1990s by Gary Sick, a member of the NSC under three US Presidents, including Carter during the 1979 US-Iran hostage crisis. And the portents for the future do not look good. Just contemplate the spectre of a Shia-controlled ‘Petrolistan’, encompassing Iran, southern Iraq and Saudi Arabia’s eastern province Al Hasa, where much of Saudi Arabia’s Shia minority and, coincidentally, most of its oil is situated. If the US military were withdrawn from the region in the near future, leaving the region in turmoil, the GCC states would probably be the first to ask for a renewed American engagement.

Khouri

The longer Western troops stay, the more people will become terrorists

I disagree. Foreign troops are here in the name of security and stability, but in fact they produce new insecurities. Osama bin Laden was partly motivated by the American presence in Saudi Arabia. To put it briefly, the longer American, British and other Western troops stay in the region, the more people will become terrorists. The situation has already turned us into barbarians: people see Americans and British on al-Jazeera and CNN being beheaded in Iraq, but you do not hear any public condemnation. Foreign troops should leave as soon as possible.

Asadi

You are right Mr. Khouri, sooner or later the Western governments will leave the region and we will stay here and will have to engage with each other, big or small, with all our peculiarities and what I said every country’s enduring, genuine and legitimate concerns and interests, beyond the short-term—if not short-sighted—and transient expediciencies of the moment and requirements of politico-military alliances. The inevitability of peaceful coexistence will force us to develop long term approaches on how to deal with each other. I would also like to underline that all of us in the region should be able to address each other’s genuine and legitimate concerns, including security concerns (which is not my cup of tea, anyhow), through home-grown democratic processes, rule of law, accountable governance, respect for and promotion of human rights, and what I prefer to call mutuality of empathy, and move, individually and collectively, towards achieving long-term sustainable, human development.

On a concrete point, mention was just made by another colleague of paragraph 8 of the UN Security Council resolution 598 on the imperative of developing regional security arrangements in the Persian Gulf. Let me also draw attention to an example of bilateral agreement between Iran and Iraq—as two important

We must develop long term approaches on how to deal with each other.

Asadi



countries in the area. I am referring to the Treaty of State Frontiers and Good Neighbourly Relations, which was signed between the two countries in June 1975—ill-fated as unfortunately it proved to be once Saddam Hussein decided to invade Iran in September 1980. That Treaty and its various Annexes and Protocols—an instrument recognized by the United Nations and the international community—address all aspects of the relations between the two countries and can still be considered a good basis to resolve the outstanding issues between us and serve the long-term goal of development and consolidation of bilateral relations.

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as inevitability of peaceful coexistence in the region. Much to the contrary, conflict is inevitable. It can be prevented only by concerted active measures.

1. Iran's Nuclear Program

One major threat to stability is, in the eyes of many Western observers, the Iranian nuclear program. Do people from the region see Iran as a peaceful country and would they want the Iranians to have nuclear weapons?

Iran is a potential threat and governments in the region are very aware of that. The ongoing Iranian presence on the disputed islands near the Strait of Hormuz shows Iran's willingness to make use of its military strength. It shows what Iran could do if foreign armies in the region were no longer here to deter it. Apart from its military potential, Iran can also use its proxies in the Gulf states to agitate the minority Shiites and thus destabilize these countries.

There is a direct link between weapons procurement in the region and the fear of Iran. Defense spending in the Gulf has increased dramatically since the 1970s with Iran and Iraq being the main reasons.

In their effort to build up a deterrent force to be prepared for the day when US and European forces might leave, governments are primarily buying airpower, aerial warning systems, and even ballistic missiles; the UAE has Russian Scuds. Defense experts agree that the UAE, Saudi Arabia and the whole GCC have come close to achieving their common goal of matching Iranian military quantity with supreme military quality. But no deterrent force could protect the Gulf states against the consequences of a military showdown where the USA and Israel are on one side and Iran is on the other.

Cooper

Conflict is inevitable unless we take concerted active measures

Perthes

Kahwaji

People are well aware of Iran's willingness to use military strength

The GCC states have almost achieved military parity with Iran

The Iranian nuclear program is a cause for concern not only for military, but also in the environmental reasons. Should there be a Iranian Chernobyl—God forbid—Kuwait would probably be harmed more than Iran itself because of its geographic proximity.

Hadian Do not forget Iran's legitimate security concerns and Iranian threat perceptions. First, Iranians are convinced for historical reasons that their country is fundamentally peaceful but often endangered. Iran has not attacked any country in 250 years, but it has often been attacked itself.

Mousavian During the past decades, Iranians were the victims of WMD, not the ones who used them. During the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi troops made the most extensive use of chemical weapons since the end of the First World War.
The Iranians were victims of WMD in the recent past

Reissner Iranians might base their assessment on historical experiences, but Western politicians look at present or future threats. It is crucial for Iran to understand that.

Atiyyah Iran has interfered in several regional conflicts during the last one and a half centuries without ever acting so crudely as actually attacking or invading any country: In 1959, they supported the Kurdish rebellion against the regime of Abd as-Sallam Arif. Since the 1980s, they have interfered in Lebanon with the help of Hezbollah.

Hadian Today, Iran faces objective security challenges: The presence of US forces in the region; the narco-terrorists from Afghanistan who have already killed at least 3300 Iranian police and citizens (by the way, we have not seen any support from the West in this war); the danger of Afghanistan and, less likely, of Pakistan becoming a failed state; Washington's attempts to stir up ethnic conflicts inside Iran; and finally, neighboring states questioning Iran's territorial integrity for example regarding the islands in the Strait of Hormuz.
Iran faces objective security challenges

Iran can rely only on its own strength
In the face of real and perceived threats Iranians feel they can rely on no one but themselves. When Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran in the Iran-Iraq war, the West either supported Saddam or remained silent instead of protesting against this grave violation of the Geneva Conventions. Iran's decision makers and citizens have believed since then that their country is of no importance for the international community and must therefore rely on its own resources for its defense.



Governments in the region might fear Iran and its nuclear program but, like it or not, the ordinary Arab and Iranian citizens want Iran to have a nuclear weapon. They are fed up with Westerners telling us, “you may not have these weapons, you may not have these systems,” tired of the tradition of double standards that often seem to verge on racism and neo-colonialism. People experience that as a degradation of their humanity and see international law only as a fig leaf for pursuing Western interests.

The West’s ongoing usage of double standards has indeed increased the support for an Iranian nuclear weapons program in the Islamic world. Israel has more than 200 nuclear warheads and has not joined the NPT, yet the West does not exert any pressure.

Western double standards also keep the GCC’s leaders from condemning Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Most Arabs, including the people in the Gulf states, are under the impression that both Christian Europeans and Jewish Israelis are allowed to have atomic bombs, but Muslims obviously are not. Pakistan is already under great pressure because of its bomb. This problem also has a growing sectarian dimension, because people are beginning to ask why the Sunnis—in Pakistan—have a bomb, but the Shia do not.

Indeed, the obvious double standards regarding weapons of mass destruction are undermining the legitimacy of the West. Israel, Pakistan, and India are not threatened with international sanctions for their disregard of non-proliferation treaties. Instead, the United States, the EU, China, Russia and other important international members compete for strategic relations with these countries. Iran, on the other hand, is threatened by sanctions for its research into the civilian use of nuclear power.

Mr. Mousavian, does Iran pursue a nuclear arms program? Mr. Cooper told us why it is hard to believe that your country only wants to satisfy its energy needs.

No, our nuclear program has nothing to do with acquiring weapons. Not only is there a fatwa, issued by our highest religious leaders, that such weapons are forbidden, but there is also all kinds of legislation supporting this fatwa.

Khouri

People in the region are fed up with Western double standards

Hadian

While Israel has more than 200 nuclear warheads...

Kahwaji

...Muslims are not allowed to have the bomb

Mousavian

Double standards undermine the West’s legitimacy

Perthes

Mousavian

Nuclear weapons are forbidden in Iran

Iran wants to have a nuclear option in order to strengthen its geopolitical position.

Schaefer



Schaefer

To be honest, the Iranian nuclear program makes sense only if it aims at nuclear weapons capability.

Then why does Iran need nuclear enrichment?

Why should Iran need nuclear enrichment even though it does not make economic sense in Iran? Iran does not have a single light water reactor. Until there is a significant number of these reactors, there is no sense in Iran having its own enrichment capability. Producing fissile material does not make any sense unless there is a much greater number of nuclear power plants, and without enrichment there is no need for conversion. Iran already has a lifelong supply for all reactors in Bushehr from Russia. The EU is willing to actively support the Iranian energy diversification program. The only possible explanation is that the whole program exists in order to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran believes it needs to have a nuclear option in order to strengthen its geopolitical position. This results from a strange dichotomy of feeling superior to its neighbors but inferior toward the United States.

Mousavian

Iran has good reasons to mistrust the West

There are very good reasons why Iran wants to close the fuel cycle in the pursuit of a civil nuclear program. Besides the lack of Western pressure on Israel, we have other reasons to accuse the West of using double standards. We have good reasons to mistrust Western governments out of our experiences after the Revolution of 1979.

If the West would have fulfilled its contracts after 1979, nobody in Iran would want to close the fuel cycle

After the Islamic Revolution, Germany, meaning Siemens, refused to complete an almost finished nuclear power plant in Iran. Even though Iran had already paid eight billion Deutsche Mark, the contract was never fulfilled. In 1974 Iran had also bought a share in a French uranium-enrichment enterprise, the gaseous diffusion consortium Eurodif. But later on, the French government did not authorize the transfer of the enriched uranium from the enrichment plant to Iran. This was due to pressure by the German and American governments. There is no guarantee that similar difficulties will not arise again. If Siemens had built the nuclear power plant, and if the Eurodif had delivered the 10% share of production of enriched uranium according to our share in the consortium, I swear to God, nobody in Iran would be thinking about a fuel cycle. But after these disappointments, Iran had no other option but to build its own fuel cycle. Now that Iran has built the capability to have a fuel cycle, why should it give it away for nothing?

Schaefer

The fact that the EU lost credibility in the 1980s is not a sufficient justification for Iran's ambitions to get highly enriched uranium.

In Iran there are different views on the issue of nuclear armament.



Hadian

But the issue of Eurodif shows that dialogue is needed. Solving these differences could be the first step toward a solution of the entire conflict about Iran's nuclear program.

The EU should indeed think about how guaranteed international fuel services could give Iran sufficient security to set aside its own fuel cycle program in spite of its rather unsatisfactory experiences with the Eurodif consortium. Even if you deny that Iran is justified to mistrust the international community after the Eurodif case, even if you think Iran should trust the EU's declarations of being willing to help, the EU should still try and get beyond this stalemate by enquiring which additional guarantees could allow Iran to strike a deal, if only to remove that recurrent Iranian argument.

Different factions in Iran hold different views on the issue of nuclear armament. Of course there are hardliners. One faction among them argues that Iran should withdraw from the NPT at once, because they consider the IAEA's inspectors as spies aiming only at gathering intelligence about Iran's nuclear program and military bases for possible attacks. They point to the example of North Korea which is shielded by its nuclear program, unlike Iraq, which was attacked because it lacked such weapons.

But the majority of Iranian elites still believes that a nuclear weapons program would decrease instead of enhance our security. First, it would lead to an arms race in the Region and the Egyptians, Saudis, Turks, Syrians and others would also acquire nuclear weapons. The idea of a nuclearized Middle East is even more frightening than elsewhere because here missiles reach the enemy country within two minutes. Such geographic proximity makes it impossible to manage mistakes and misinformations about incoming attacks. Second, our conventional superiority is going to evaporate with the aquisition of nuclear weapons by other countries in the Region. Third, a nuclear Iran would probably make smaller states form closer alliances with superpowers outside the region directed against Iran.

Fourth, we have good reasons to fear nuclear proliferation in general even more than the US because our borders are less protected and nuclear terrorism would be a more immediate threat to our country.

Among those who are against actually having nuclear weapons, there are again different factions. Some foreign policy civil servants and experts argue that Iran should have only the knowledge and technology needed for the peaceful use of atomic energy.

Polenz

Maybe Iran has reasons to mistrust the West—we need dialogue

Perkovich

Hadian

Regarding the nuclear program, some Iranians are hardliners ...

... but the majority believes that nuclear weapons would make the country less secure

Our borders are even less protected against nuclear terrorism than those of the US

Another group, mostly people from the military and some academic experts, is convinced that Iran should also have the capability to build nuclear weapons and should possess the necessary components, without actually building the weapons themselves.

The government position is somewhere in between these two standpoints. That is, yes, we should have a closed nuclear fuel cycle, but we are ready to provide all the necessary guarantees to reassure the international community about our peaceful objectives.

The West should be careful not to support Iran's radical faction by isolating moderate forces

The West should be very careful not to undermine this compromise by severe sanctions or military actions, because that might support the more radical group and result in an immediate weaponization of Iran's nuclear program.

Perthes

So Iran does not want nuclear weapons, but it could want them for good reasons? Would it be rational to pursue a nuclear arms program?

Polenz

Iran should not try to imitate North Korea

Mr. Hadian said North Korea proves that nuclear weapons protect you against the danger of regime change. Just the opposite is true. The moment the international community is sure about Iran's aspirations to build nuclear weapons, it will undertake every effort to prevent it from succeeding. Iran's striving for nuclear weapons seems to me like an attempted bank robbery with a water pistol—some people die trying this.

Perthes

But some succeed, too.

Cooper

North Korea's trump card is not its nuclear weapons program

By the way: North Korea's trump card is not its nuclear weapons, but the conventional ones which it uses to threaten South Korea. Its alleged nuclear weapons are rather irrelevant in this conflict.

Perthes

But is it not true that North Korea became more secure once it had convinced the international community that it had nuclear weapons? Is it not true that Saddam Hussein would have been better off had he managed to make everybody think he had a nuclear arsenal?

Cooper

Avoid making people believe you have the bomb if you do not have it

If you manage to convince the world that you have acquired nuclear bombs, you might be better off, but not if you convey the impression you want these weapons without yet having them.

The worst position you can put yourself in is to make people fear that you might acquire a gun without having one. Everybody gets worried and considers attacking you, and you do not even have a gun to defend yourself. That was the mistake Saddam Hussein made: He managed to convince the world that he did have weapons.

Iran could indeed not harm its own security more efficiently than by threatening the world declaring its wish for nuclear weapons without having them yet.

But basically I am convinced that acquiring nuclear weapons would be fundamentally bad policy for Iran and other countries in the region. I used to live next to crazy people with guns in Montana, but it was not at all rational for me to buy a gun just because my crazy neighbors had guns. It was much smarter to call the police in case a neighbor threatened me.

Let me take up the story of the two neighbors: There is one neighbor with a gun—the US—and one unarmed—Iran—, who have distrusted each other for twenty years. The one with the gun tells the other, trust me, you do not need a gun. Then he breaks into another neighbor's house, and says, do not worry, this will not happen to you, no need for you to have a gun. What would you do if you were in the place of the unarmed neighbor?

If there is an Iranian nuclear arms program, it is motivated much more by a perceived threat from the US than by regional security considerations. In the regional context, nuclear missiles would make no sense, as Mr. Hadian said. But look at how the United States treats countries that have the bomb—like India, Pakistan and North Korea. These countries are not less secure than before, to say the least. Iran, placed on the axis of evil and time and again subject to considerations about military strikes, does have good reasons for not feeling entirely secure. Mr Bush insists that in the nuclear row all options, including the military, are on the table. It would be quite understandable and not entirely wrong, if the Iranian leadership thought the best way to be safe from American threats would be to have the bomb.

The acquisition of nuclear weapons brings about the threat to Iran in the first place! As an American, I have the constitutional right to buy a gun. But the purchase of a gun does not make me and my family more secure.

My worst nightmare as an American is that we will undertake a military strike against Iran, because we cannot assess the progress and the motives of its nuclear program. At the moment, the chance of this happening is still very low,

McFaul

A gun does not necessarily increase your security

Hoffmann

But North Korea is not threatened by the US!

McFaul

Confidence building lies in Iran's interest

A nuclear free zone in the Middle East is the only option.

Schaefer



but Iranian actions are making it more likely. It is up to Iran to do some confidence building and stop its nuclear program.

Schaefer

It is simply not true that Iran could increase its own security by acquiring nuclear weapons. We need to get out of the vicious circle of mutual distrust, threats and armaments buildup. A nuclear free zone in the Middle East is the only option.

Hoffmann

Why should Iran behave rationally—the West does not!

Mr. Schaefer and Mr. McFaul, you are asking Iran to behave completely rationally in a conflict that has been highly emotional for decades, without asking the same degree of rationality from the Western side.

Only three years ago, there was a discussion about military action against Iran within think tanks well-connected to the American government. When Mr. Schaefer said there was “no objective reason for Iran to feel threatened”, he added, “at least not at the moment”. This restriction might be reason enough for Iran to want an atomic bomb.

And Mr. McFaul, if you consider a nuclear attack on Iran an—even though remote—real threat, Iranian threat perceptions are not as far off as you said earlier. Maybe an American nuclear strike against Iran is the Iranians’ worst nightmare, too.

McFaul

The US never attacked Iran

You think it is rational for Iran to want the bomb because think tanks in the US debated a possible invasion three years ago and there are some isolated persons that might consider a nuclear strike if Iran continues to radicalize its policy? But when the Iranian President demands that Israel be wiped off the face of the earth, Iranians assure us that is not serious because their country has not started a war for several decades. The US has not attacked Iran ever. But of course I agree that it would be useful if the US provided certain security guarantees that it will not invade Iran.

Mousavian

Solving the nuclear issue could be a model for solving other conflicts between the West and Iran

Solving the nuclear issue through a compromise with the EU is decisive, not because of Iran’s nuclear ambitions, but because it could be a role model to handle future differences as well. Let me propose concrete ideas for the solution.

I am convinced that the issue of Iran’s nuclear policy can be solved in the near future on the basis of the following five principles:

The EU must respect Iran’s right to use nuclear technology for civilian purposes according to the framework of existing non-proliferation treaties, without any discrimination.

Solving the nuclear issue through a compromise with the EU is decisive.

Mousavian



Iran should respect EU and international concerns about the possibility of the diversion of Iran’s nuclear capability.

Iran should be prepared to give all necessary objective guarantees to assure the EU and the international community that its nuclear capabilities are not diverted for military purposes.

The EU should be prepared for comprehensive cooperation with Iran in the areas of economy, security, technology and nuclear technology on the basis of the so-called Paris Agreement of 2004 and the guarantees laid down in that agreement.

Iran’s neighbors should be reassured about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program through confidence-building measures.

The EU has never questioned Iran’s right to exercise peaceful nuclear power under the NPT. We do not have a legal argument, Europe is just demanding confidence-building measures. Understandably, 18 years of clandestine nuclear activities undermined the confidence that this program has been solely used for civilian purposes. Therefore, the IAEA’s Board of Governors urged Tehran to stop all activities which were perceived as illegal under the NPT until international confidence could be restored.

We have signed international conventions banning the use and the production of weapons of mass destruction, culminating in an intensive cooperation with the IAEA. During the last two years, we had 12,000 person-days of inspection in Iran—we were even prepared to have a permanent specialist of the IAEA supervise our facilities in Natanz and Isfahan.

Signing conventions is not enough. To build confidence, Iran needs to behave like a reliable partner of the international community over a certain period of time, and by that I do not mean a few months but between 10 and 15 years. If you voluntarily renounce your legal right to exercise certain activities like enrichment for such a period, the international community would regard you as a responsible player in the field of security and you would be playing in the league where Brazil or South Africa are today. It is still possible to solve the nuclear issue overnight on the basis of the NPT rules.

If I were an analyst in Tehran, I would recommend to my country the brilliant strategic move of playing by the rules of the NPT instead of provoking fear about its

Schaefer

Europe demands confidence building measures for good reasons

Mousavian

Iran signed all kinds of conventions banning WMD!

Schaefer

Signing conventions is not enough, you must behave responsibly for a certain period of time

McFaul

If Iran really wants to put international pressure on Israel, it should play by the NPT rules

Mousavian

nuclear program. This would put Israel under pressure to sign the NPT—just what you say would allow for a breakthrough in the perception of the Islamic world and end the impression that the West applies double standards. As long as Iran breaks the NPT rules, blaming Israel for not joining the treaty is not very convincing.

You ask us to play by the rules, which is fine with us, but you do not honor it if we fulfil your request. If you want us to renounce our right to a closed fuel cycle—a right within the NPT—who guarantees that you will not ask us to abandon our chemical program next time, despite the fact that we signed the convention on chemical weapons? Who guarantees that the West will not mistrust us on that and believe that we want to divert chemical technology to weapons production?

zu Guttenberg

How can Iran provide “objective guarantees”?

Mr. Mousavian, would you please describe what exactly “necessary objective guarantees” could mean? I sometimes have the impression that this term is only one of the more prominent euphemisms often heard in the current debate?

Mousavian

We need a two step approach ...

It is not a euphemism at all. Iran is willing to give guarantees that its nuclear program is not aiming at building nuclear weapons. We need to proceed in two steps, one short term approach to allow for further negotiations, to agree on the mid-term approach to solve the issues at hand in a sustainable manner. Here is my—purely personal—proposal on how to solve the issues at hand.

At first, concerning Isfahan, we would like to make use of the initiative by South African president Thabo Mbeki. His country would deliver the yellowcake needed and we would deliver the whole production of gas in return to ensure that it is not used for nuclear weapons. I think that South Africa would be a better solution than Russia, even though Russia has offered a similar deal.

At Natanz, the IAEA is welcome to supervise all activities. The facility there is the main concern of the West, which will be taken seriously by Iran. Therefore, it should also be flexible about a closed fuel cycle. With an open fuel cycle, there could be no weapons production at all. Natanz could be run as a joint venture. As board members, the EU and Russia would be able to supervise its production without any problems.

... to be negotiated in a package

All these measures should be negotiated in a package that also includes a pilot project and confidence-building measures.

Perthes

Could you please clarify what you mean by pilot?

Europe is ready to contribute a lot to confidence building if Iran is ready to do the same.

Schaefer



In order to assure and publicly demonstrate that Iran is not deprived of its legitimate right to a closed fuel cycle, we need to operate a limited number of centrifuges as the first step and continue negotiation for the objective guarantees for industrial production as the second step.

A pilot scale enrichment is extremely problematic not only because of the danger of diversion. Even after extensive inspections, the IAEA is still unable to answer the question of what happened to the advanced P2 gas centrifuges that supposedly came from Pakistan eight years ago. There might be undeclared facilities in Iran, operated maybe by military organizations, where the results of the pilot could be applied to advance the nuclear weapons program.

If Iran sets up a pilot scale enrichment facility there, it crosses the red line of enrichment. You can not be a little bit pregnant, either you are or you are not, and you either do enrichment or you do not. It would be very unwise for Iran to fool around with this extremely important aspect of confidence.

The Iranian people are interested in human rights, wealth, welfare, and maybe also in Iran's oil production, but not in any enrichment facilities. That is only something the government is trying to portray to the international community.

Europe is ready to contribute a lot to confidence building if Iran is ready to do the same. We offer you a deep engagement not only in the nuclear sector but in all sectors that are crucial for Iran's ability to tap into the global economy.

Instead of steering a hazardous political course, Iran should take on its responsibility as the leading regional actor. Its geopolitical position, its resources, its geography and its cultural and historic importance would probably propel Iran to the position of a leading regional and even global player within two decades.

2. Iran's Regional Responsibility

Iran as a potential hegemon must aim at creating a balance ensuring regional stability—especially now that the progress of its nuclear program adds another, frightening aspect to its hegemonic potential. It must therefore try to understand its smaller neighbors.

There are two ways for smaller neighbors to deal with a regional hegemon. You can either try to balance its power by aligning yourself with other smaller

Mousavian

Perkovich

What happened with the P2 gas centrifuges from Pakistan?

Schaefer

Pilot scale enrichment crosses the red line

Iran could be a global player in two decades if it behaves responsibly

Perkovich

Iran's neighbors have yet to decide about how to deal with the hegemon

China reassures its neighbors
about its peaceful ambitions—
that is what a hegemon must do

states or you can decide to climb onto the hegemon's bandwagon. As for Iran's neighbors, they are yet to decide on their strategy, but age old aversions between Shia-dominated Iran and its Sunni-dominated neighbors make the balance option much more likely and the bandwagon less likely. I doubt if that would be good for Iran. Diplomatic reconciliation would probably serve its interests much better.

Along these lines, China is an interesting example. For twenty years, this rising global power has reassured its neighbors about its peacefulness, thus successfully preventing them from directing any treaties against China. These diplomatic efforts included a very understated way of handling China's nuclear weapons. Of course, besides effective diplomacy economic reasons have also contributed to China's success. The fact that China has recently faced a greater possibility of its neighbors trying to balance its power despite all these efforts shows what Iran may be confronted with if it fails to adopt a more conciliatory style.

Schaefer
Politics is about perceptions

A hegemon must behave responsibly and peacefully, instead of threatening its neighboring states. Unfortunately, it no longer matters whether this is a real or perceived threat because politics is all about perceptions.

Of course Iran can follow its own foreign policy strategy, but it should start to reconsider its relationship with actors like Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad; Iran's support for these groups is seen by the United States and Europe as a major hindrance to Iran becoming a responsible partner in the region.

We need a responsible Iran to establish
a new security structure at the Gulf

Should Iran decide to behave as a responsible actor, there is a chance for a whole new security structure for the Gulf region. Assuming Iran would acquire the trust of its potential partners, it would be in a very good position to take the lead in a cooperative effort such as a GCC-Iraq-Iran-Yemen cooperation.

Mousavian
Iran already acts responsibly

Iran's policy concerning its regional role and its relations with the West after the fall of Saddam Hussein is a responsible and peaceful one. It rests on five cornerstones:

The disappearance of Saddam Hussein provides the opportunity to build a new security structure for the region, taking into account stability and security, the fight against terrorism and organized crime, arms control to eliminate WMD in the region and to stop the conventional arms race, the peaceful bilateral resolution of border disputes and security for energy exports as well as expanding economic, social and cultural relations, establishing good relations with the international community and the transatlantic partners, and finally promoting democratization, human rights and the rule of law.



Iran and the US need mediation.

Hoffmann

The presence of US troops must gradually be reduced to counter the impression that the US is only another power in the long succession of outside powers imposing their will on the region by military force.

The tension between the USA and Iran should be reduced, both sides should instead start cooperating on their common fields of interest and work to establish just solutions for areas of differing interests.

The USA must manage to walk a fine line to pursue its goal of bringing stability to the region while removing fears of American domination in the region and deflecting its image as the leader of a Jewish-Christian alliance against Islamic countries.

Despite the influence of the USA and Iran in Iraq, internal factors are the main determinants. All foreign actors, including Europe, should recognize this and should establish a close cooperation with regional actors to ensure the stability, security, unity and integrity of Iraq.

As to the relation between the US and Iran: The position of the United States, at least its posture, has obviously changed in the last couple of months. Neither President Bush nor Secretary of State Rice responded to President Ahmadinejad's infamous remarks about Israel. Since August 2005, in spite of the resumption of work at Isfahan, the US has made no bellicose remarks, as they have done in the past. These are signals that the US might open a window of opportunity for a dialog in the near future if Iran behaves accordingly, though that window can close quickly in favor of a regime change strategy.

That is rather encouraging, taking into account that today the US has less contact with Iran than with North Korea.

Iran and the US need mediation. They have such a long history of mutual distrust and of demanding the other side make the first step that they will not be able to make a breakthrough themselves. There is an endless history of missed opportunities, mutual disappointments, unrewarded first steps, misunderstood openings, unheard proposals, endlessly repeated reproaches, denials, injuries, defamations. Iran reproaches the US for not rewarding its cooperation on Afghanistan while the US demands that Iran prove its willingness to cooperate, the US reproaches Iran with promoting terrorism while Iran claims to be a victim of terrorism itself—and so on and so on. Europe should not only appeal to both sides but should work out a step-by-step scenario detailing how to encourage an Iranian-American rapprochement.

Perkovich

Since August 2005, the US made no bellicose remarks about Iran

Cooper

Hoffmann

Iran and the US cannot break the deadlock without European help

European integration has finally brought
peace and security to our continent.

Polenz



Schaefer

Without political will on both sides,
mediation makes no sense

European mediation between Iran and the US makes sense only in the medium-term perspective, because there is no political will from either side right now. But the Middle East's way to security and prosperity leads indeed via the battle of the titans. The decisive question is whether Iran and the US as the major players in the region will come to an understanding.

Perthes

Could the CSCE be a model ...

3. Frameworks for Security

Let us now come to the collective security arrangement Mr. Mousavian mentioned. Could the CSCE be a model for enhancing cooperation and security in the region?

Schaefer

... of how to stop a vicious circle?

When Europe started the CSCE in 1977, the Cold War was at its peak. The two major players were locked in conflict, a frightening arms race was threatening the world and small powers like Germany were victims of the conflict. To stop the vicious cycle, each side had to engage with its potential opponent. The CSCE process concentrated on a commonly accepted mix of security guarantees, economic cooperation and human rights declarations that allowed both sides to gain from it. The US and Iran should start a similar process to reverse the trend of mutual suspicion and threats in the region. Europe would be prepared to offer its good offices to facilitate such a process.

Mützenich

From my personal experience during the Cold War's arms race, I know that one effective way to deal with the arms race in the region—because what you are calling militarization is in fact an arms race—would probably be to initiate a public discussion. That might channel the fears of the people into beneficial political pressure. Also, to end the arms race of the Cold War, arms control talks were very useful. I encourage the regional actors to engage in such talks.

Polenz

A security conference
might be a starting point

Perhaps we need the help of outside actors to initiate a process comparable to what happened in Western Europe after 1945. Maybe a conference set up with the support of the West could be the starting point for that.

In the Middle East, the people do not even trust their own governments, let alone foreign ones. The Middle East needs more discussion, more transparency and more integration.

Germany does not feel threatened by the nuclear capabilities of neighboring France today because the German government and the German people finally

We must indeed encourage people in the region to start talking to each other.

Meyer



trust France after centuries of bitter conflicts—European integration has finally brought peace and security to our continent.

We must indeed encourage people in the region to start talking to each other. We need forums where the regional actors—not only at the governmental level, but also at the grassroots level—can define their own respective roles. Only then we can start thinking about how Europe and America can contribute. But already now, we could agree on areas of cooperation and involvement ranging from the fight against terrorism to curbing drug smuggling and organized crime on a bilateral base or with the GCC as a regional body.

The idea of a CSCE-like process for the region seems very attractive at first, but the confidence-building measures that were suitable for Europe during the Cold War might not be the right thing for the region at the moment. In Europe, essentially every government accepted the status quo. All that was needed in the 1970s and 1980s was to convince both sides that this was really true. I doubt if the circumstances are similar in the region today.

The notion of a commonly accepted status quo is questionable considering the state Iraq is in and that Saudi Arabia's future is at best unclear and at worst frightening. It seems that Iran ought to be the status quo power country in the region because it has the highest interest in preserving frontiers and the distribution of power. Yet Iran still adheres to revolutionary rhetoric. So where is the majority of actors that want to preserve the status quo?

The notion of status quo and the related hopes for a CSCE-like process are indeed problematic: Today, geo-political stability in the region, basically dating back to the end of the Second World War or at least to 1967, seems to be vanishing. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza has changed a border which had been stable for 40 years. If Iraq splits up, new borders will arise—just think of the emergence of a Kurdish entity. Borders are also under pressure because loyalties and definitions change as transnational confessional and ethnic ties become more important: People now speak about Shia oil instead of Iranian oil, which opens rather frightening perspectives for new conflicts.

Another important aspect distinguishes the region from CSCE Europe: We in the West feared the Warsaw Pact states' missiles and nuclear warheads, but we never hated the people in East Germany, or in Poland or even in the Soviet Union,

Meyer

We must establish forums for the regional actors

Cooper

To start a CSCE-like process you need countries accepting the status quo ...

... which nobody in the Middle East seems to do

Perthes

With borders coming under pressure, stability in the region seems to vanish

In the Middle East, anger and hate are stronger than fear

nor did they hate us. Fear itself would be a good initial reason to rebuild some kind of confidence, like the Europeans did during the Cold War. But in this region here, there are emotions stronger than fear: anger, hate, and the wish to seek revenge for all kinds of historical injuries or traumas.

Cooper

Maybe a cooperative security structure like NATO would be a more useful idea for the region even though it is of course hard to imagine because of the deep rifts between different countries. Multilateral agreements are more transparent and inspire more confidence than bilateral ones. Even though the Soviet Union no doubt regarded NATO as a hostile organization, it was easier to read than a series of bilateral agreements between the US and its allies.

Steltzer

The UAE search for reliable partners and embrace NATO-ICI

For the UAE, the NATO-ICI initiative is a very attractive first step. Neither the states of the Non-Aligned Movement, which the UAE joined after their independence in 1971, nor the United States as its bilateral partner since Saddam's invasion in Kuwait, were well suited to the specific needs of a small country like the UAE. The Non-Aligned Movement could not prevent the loss of islands in the Strait of Hormuz to Iran and of a piece of land to Saudi Arabia, and the US is just too big a partner. Neither the GCC nor any of the EU's strategic initiatives is considered to be of much help against the hegemonic aspirations of Iran, which seems more and more to be walking in the footsteps of the ancient Persian empire. This is one of the reasons why the UAE is not only spending such large amounts of money to bolster its defense but also embrace the NATO-ICI initiative enthusiastically as a possible step to a much needed collective security arrangement.

Perthes

What about Iraq? Is it or will it be a player in enhancing regional security despite its internal problems?

Atiyah

Iran and Turkey are the region's big players, not the Arab states.

First, today the most important players in the region are Iran and Turkey, not any Arab country. Even the Palestinians would like to rely on the Iranians rather than on the Arabs nowadays. The Iraqis themselves are no longer actors; they are pawns in a game of chess played by the American-European team against actors like Iran.

Iraq itself is especially ill-suited to playing an active role because it is on the verge of breaking up. The division of Iraq according to ethnic and sectarian lines is discussed openly in certain Iraqi circles. This new phenomenon shows how divided the country already is.

Therefore, there is no unified position toward Iran. Some Iraqi Kurds see Iran as a threat, others as a potential ally. Many Shi'ites of course count on Iran to protect them after the Americans leave, and most of them would like to see a nuclear armed Iran because, it would int their eyes be more powerful.

Iran in its turn does have a strategy for Iraq and pursues its implementation very skillfully. Out of age-old traditions as an empire, the Iranians are used to playing diplomatic games. They are much cleverer and much more patient than the Arabs – an Iraqi waves a carpet in six weeks, Iranians take two years for that. As I said earlier, Iran has interfered in several regional conflicts without ever actually attacking or invading a country: Today, Iran is of course a major actor in Iraq, and they have many cards to play. Some Iranians are advocating an alliance between Hizbollah, Syria and Shi'ite Iraq – a nightmare: If it succeeds, there will be a Shia-dominated crescent, which will radicalize the whole region, first and foremost Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. To prevent this worst case scenario, the Americans should seek some kind of a rapprochement with Iran.

The United States has always had a good sense of political realism, too, especially when it comes to foreign policy. Just think of the Iran-Contra affair in the mid-1980s, when the Americans delivered weapons to Iran, while supporting Saddam Hussein against the Iranian counterattack.

Today America should revert to this strength of pragmatism and should use Iran's traditional diplomatic capabilities to establish some kind of cooperation. Without it, the situation in Iraq might go out of control very soon.

If we fail to establish a functioning state where Iraqis govern their own life, this will have disastrous spill-over effects in the wider region. Especially the axis from Iran-Iraq-Syria to Saudi Arabia opens a frightening perspective.

Let me conclude with a few brief remarks. The challenges for the region are as numerous as the need for action is obvious. During our discussion we have identified the main causes of instability and discussed ways of tackling them in an open and sometimes controversial dialogue not only between representatives of the West and the region, but also among representatives of these respective groups themselves. For partners who have increasingly lost confidence in each other during the past years, we have had a remarkably high quality exchange. Meetings like ours could, I think, be important steps to rebuilding confidence.

Traditionally, Iran knows how to play the diplomatic game

A Shia crescent would radicalize the whole region

The US has always had a good sense of political realism...

...they should now cooperate with Iran

Schaefer

State failure in Iraq would have a disastrous spill-over effect

Perthes



von Weizsäcker

The West has a duty to help

Like Western Europe, the Middle East
can one day achieve peace and prosperity

Stability in the Persian Gulf is a major task for the West not only because 35% of worldwide oil imports come from here or because extremism in the region threatens the United States and Europe most directly.

It is also our duty to do all we can to help people here live a decent life, as Mr. Khouri put it shortly and aptly. After decades of a complicated history dominated by conflicts, under the not always beneficial involvement of Western powers, we need to bring stability and prosperity to a region that because of its tremendously rich culture and immense natural resources has the potential to be one of the most blessed places on the globe.

I do hope very much that the Western partners will find a way to foster the rule of law, participation and the peaceful solution of conflicts in the Middle East according to their respective strengths. If Europe and the United States work firmly but patiently, complementing each other in close cooperation, and reaching out to the majority of people in the region that long for stability and an end to conflict, we will one day see a region emerge where peace and prosperity flourish as they do—still one of the most wonderful surprises of my life—in Western Europe today. As Mr. Cooper rightly said, people in Europe do not fight each other any more because they have found a way of integrating with each other and finally trust their neighbors after centuries of horrible conflicts. I honestly believe in the possibility that the participants of the 300th Bergedorf Round Table, maybe in Tehran or Beirut, will be able to look back at a similarly marvelous development, if all actors involved decide to put their respective egoisms aside to make a common effort for a common future.