MIDDLE EAST – WAYS FOR DIALOGUE AND PEACE

A ROLE FOR EUROPE

Socialist Group Conference
European Parliament
Brussels 20-21 September 2006

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PSE
Socialist Group in the European Parliament

Foreword

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament organized a Conference on Middle East: Ways for dialogue and peace – A role for Europe *on 20-21 September 2006 in Brussels. The aim of this Conference was to discuss, in the framework of one single event, both the political situation in the* Middle East after the conflict in Lebanon in the summer and, in a wider context, the cultural and political dimensions of politics in, and our relations with Muslim countries.

*Two panels were therefore organized. The first session (*After the conflict in Lebanon*) focused, with the participation of political actors from the countries concerned, on the political crisis in Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, but also on the role of the European Union in finding a just and lasting peace in the region. The second session (*Politics and religion in the Muslim world*) concentrated, with the participation of experts, on the possibilities of enhancing a constructive intercultural dialogue with our political partners in the Muslim world, with special focus on the religious aspects, in order to achieve a better under-standing of each other. In the margins of the Conference, Members of the Group had the opportunity to have more in-depth discussions with the speakers at the event.*

*In this booklet, you will find the speeches and contributions delivered by the representatives of the Socialist Group (*President Martin Schulz, Vice-Presidents Pasqualina Napoletano, Jan Marinus Wiersma and Hannes Swoboda*) and by our guests in the course of the event. As the Socialist Group has decided to further strengthen relations with our political partners in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East, in order to discuss issues of mutual concerns and the possibilities of joint political initiatives, the Group intends to organize a series of conferences and seminars also in 2007 in this field.*

Martin Schulz

President
of the Socialist Group

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament took the decision to hold this conference some time ago. We had no inkling at the planning stage of how much more heavily we would all be relying on approaches to solving the Middle East crises by the time the conference was held. The conference therefore takes on a greater importance than expected, because we can contribute actively to making it a platform for dialogue involving all interested parties. This is an important opportunity, not only for the conference, but for us all. One thing is quite clear: the Middle East crises can be resolved only through dialogue.

There is no alternative to dialogue and multilateralism for the resolution of international conflicts. I believe that international conflicts – even in the form of regional crises with international relevance – can be resolved only within the framework of the international organisations in place for conflict resolution and their structures, by involving all the relevant forces in the dialogue. We, in the Socialist Group, consider this the only viable way forward.

I would like to state right from the outset that never in the history of mankind has a conflict been solved by violence. Simple and simplistic as it sounds, I nevertheless believe it needs to be said at the start of a conference such as this that violence is not a solution, and therefore renunciation of violence is the only way to solve international conflicts.

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The Socialist Group in the European Parliament has been dealing with the issue of conflict-resolution strategies for the Middle East for a very long time. Furthermore, the composition of our panel this afternoon – the variety of personalities, origins and backgrounds – is representative of our ultimate aim: cross-border dialogue.

We are more acutely aware than ever, particularly since our Group delegation's visits to the Middle East that it is not possible at present to bring all the forces, organisations, conflicting parties and countries involved together around the same table. What is possible, however, is to gather those prepared to enter into dialogue. One thing history has taught us is that, if people enter into dialogue, they can start something that, ultimately, countries and organisations cannot avoid.

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament considers dialogue essential for the resolution of all conflicts. I am obliged to our guests for accepting our invitation and for their openness to dialogue.

Allow me to make three basic comments on our policy-thinking. As President of the Socialist Group, I would like to start this conference by sending out a clear message: the approach to conflict resolution that has been followed in recent years by the Government of the United States, with the Bush-doctrine, has been a complete and utter failure. The US policy of unilateralism, based on the use of force, has failed. The thinking of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, therefore, is that Europe must fill the political vacuum left by this failure. Our thinking differs fundamentally from that of the United States. The process of pacifying the whole region is possible only if equal respect is shown for the dignity of all parties involved.

In the face of all the disputes, all the conflicts and all the conflicting interests, the first step to pacification in the Middle East is simply to begin by taking note of the concerns, legitimate or otherwise, of the individual parties, rather than assessing them

at this stage. All parties must be assured that their dignity and the legitimacy of their concerns can form part of, and be reflected in, a peace process. This entails participants in the process respecting the dignity of their counterparts at all times.

As a second step all the peoples, countries and governments in the region need to show mutual respect and recognition, as these are essential preconditions for all subsequent steps.

A second point that is essential to the strategy of the Socialist Group: if there is mutual recognition, if existing agreements and borders are accepted, countries will no longer need to resort to means – including violent means – of disputing these agreements and borders. If existing structures, borders and agreements are accepted, they cannot be contested. This may sound simplistic, but only through mutual recognition there is a basis for the starting point: dialogue.

The EU can contribute to making some progress in the Middle East. The Socialist Group in the European Parliament will endeavour to press for the EU Member States and institutions to take the following steps.

It is possible to involve Syria to a greater extent than before, and that it is at least worth taking the trouble to engage it in dialogue on the subject. This dialogue will be conditional on Syria's recognition of the security situation in Lebanon that derives from Resolution 1701. If Lebanon is to enjoy full sovereignty, it needs to know its borders are secure, which means that Syria must commit itself to recognising and monitoring its border with Lebanon.

Following our visit to the Middle East, and Damascus in particular, I am certainly optimistic that the Syrian Government can be won over to such a step. There are no guarantees, but we should weigh up all the possibilities and determine whether Syria is prepared to allow the monitoring of the Syrian-Lebanese border to be shared by both countries, particularly in the areas where the

> **All parties must be assured that their dignity and the legitimacy of their concerns can form part of, and be reflected in, a peace process**

delineation of this border is undisputed. This would be an initial step towards confidence-building and, if it were to succeed with European help, it would also be a good way of showing that Europe is ready and able to contribute to tangible steps in the Middle East. Talks on border monitoring would create scope for us to enter into discussions and dialogue.

If a Palestinian national unity government could be formed, in which Fatah and Hamas agreed to share leadership of the Palestinian Authority; if the parties could agree on the Palestinian Authority as the representative body; if they could agree on the recognition of the existing agreements and, above all, the right of the State of Israel to exist, this would be a step with enormous potential to open up possibilities for dialogue in the region. Those of us who had the opportunity to discuss this with President Abbas, those who had the opportunity to speak to representatives of the parties concerned in the Palestinian territories, returned more optimistic than when we left. I hope this process will continue, and that the dialogue between Hamas and Fatah will bear fruit.

The formation of a national unity government would be a huge step forward that I know would also be welcomed by many Israelis. Despite all the distrust that persists in Israel – some of it understandable – a national unity government that recognises, directly or indirectly, Israel's right to exist, and that recognises existing Middle East agreements and enables the renunciation of violence, would give Israel – the government and other forces open to this – the chance to enter into constructive dialogue. The first result of this could be an exchange of prisoners. This, although a small step, could have major repercussions.

We are in a situation in which it is not unrealistic to say that success is possible. On the contrary, success is perfectly possible.

This shows, although recent weeks have seen a devastating, regrettable and to some extent reprehensible war in Lebanon, one

consequence: there has been some progress in the region. The Socialist Group in the European Parliament wants to support this progress, and this conference is also intended to be a small contribution.

As I mentioned earlier, we visited Syria, Israel and the Palestinian territories. My colleagues – Ms Napoletano, Mr Swoboda, Ms De Keyser and Ms Patrie – went to Syria and Lebanon, whilst Mr Rasmussen, took the same route as I did. We also met representatives of several member parties of the Socialist Group at a different level. Many other colleagues are visiting the region. Tony Blair recently visited the Palestinian territories and Israel. There has been perceptible progress in recent days. There is growing openness to dialogue. Let our conference be a small contribution to seizing the opportunity arising from this.

The guiding idea of the Socialist Group – diplomacy wherever possible, humanitarian aid where it is urgently needed and military action only as a very last resort – can lead to success.

This trio – solidarity, humanitarian aid and prioritising diplomacy – is the way to build confidence and thus make the third point, military intervention, ultimately superfluous.

I hope that this conference will further promote the dialogue that is needed.

Pasqualina Napoletano

Vice-President
of the Socialist Group

Some time ago, the PSE Group launched a political initiative to define a long-term strategy for relations between Europe and the Mediterranean. When we talk about this region, however, we do not want – nor is it possible – to confine ourselves to the traditional Euro-Mediterranean policy defined by the 'Barcelona Process'. Some 11 years have passed since this fundamental policy came into being and there has been no shortage of significant opportunities for us and the European institutions to take stock of it.

The time has come to revive this strategy and to widen the geographical definition of this aspect of the EU's external relations so that it includes the entire Middle East region. We are seeing the emergence of new conflicts, the causes of which no longer stem from known historical and political factors – such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – but triggered by cultural and religious issues. To put it simply, the threat of a 'clash of civilisations' is upon us.

It is not a case of making generalisations that fortunately are unjustified given the variety of positions and models that exist in the Arab and Muslim world with respect to the spread of political Islamism. Yet nor is it a question of underestimating the risks and dangers of extremist and fundamentalist radicalisation, which may spill over into terrorism. Rather, what we need is an open discussion on the reasons for all this tension and on the responsibilities that the United States and Europe shoulder too.

In political terms, the unilateralist attitude of the United States has had a dramatic impact, leading to the war in Iraq and the inability of the international community to make any progress in

the search for solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is despite the diplomatic and economic efforts made by Europe to help the Palestinian people. This contradictory and unsound policy is in response to an Arab and Muslim world in which non-democratic regimes and social and cultural conservatism continue to prevail, in conflict with the universal values of democracy and freedom.

The question we must ask is whether we want to continue down the path of frustrated opposition, or whether we want to build more solid bridges of dialogue and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity.

We believe this strategic approach must be used to redefine both the current European initiative in view of the various ongoing crises and the medium and long-term tools available to the EU.

Firstly, the political dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) must be strengthened, particularly with regard to the South, at a time when relations with the countries and peoples of the Mediterranean could not be more complex. We have come far since the original idea of the 'ring of friends' that underpinned this policy following the accession of Central and Eastern European countries, when the aim was to build strong ties with all our new neighbours founded on shared and common values.

We cannot simply update the Association and Cooperation Agreements with these countries, accentuating a bilateral dimension that might strengthen their resistance to the inevitable demands for political reform, for more ambitious objectives. The current European strategy makes no real political or financial investment in the added value represented by the regional and sub-regional dimension of cooperation policy. The European Parliament has said this numerous times, but the response from the Council and the Commission has been poor. 'Technocratic' management of the ENP, focusing only on the definition of Action Plans for each country, risks ignoring both current political developments across the region and the underlying movements creating unrest in these societies.

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In the countries of the South, each with different domestic situations, some attempts at social and institutional reform are visible. However, the current mood in Arab-Islamic societies risks undermining these efforts. Europe has not yet fully taken account of the dramatic changes taking place in Mediterranean societies and in Arab states in particular; changes in attitude first and foremost, and in the perception these peoples have of their relationship with Europe and the United States. We are not yet facing the dreaded 'clash of civilisations', but it is clear that misunderstanding, mistrust and prejudice are increasing.

This is nothing new: these attitudes can be traced back to the early 1990s and the first Gulf War. Since then, the rift with the United States and other Western countries has continued to widen, dramatically reaching its breaking point on 11 September 2001. This is a cultural rather than a political crisis. Europe, so often unable to act, despite expectations from the Arab-Islamic world, reveals its own weaknesses on these occasions. It is still paying for its divided views on the decision of the US to declare war on Iraq. Even in situations such as the recent one which led to the decision to send troops into Lebanon, Europe failed to carve out a role for itself, because yet again the will of individual governments prevailed.

The rise in impending clashes and conflicts does not just concern the Arab and Muslim world. Even in Europe, within our own countries we are witnessing desecularisation and a rallying cry for cultural and religious traditions by Muslim communities. The typical response tends to be identity-based, with the affirmation of a European identity, even if defined exclusively in terms of a Christian Europe.

We need more sensible political decisions and analyses and a concerted effort at a more serious and in-depth review, especially as Europe is the benchmark by which the crisis of integration models is measured. In the *face-to-face encounter*, as the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas defined it, the universalism-communitarism and assimilationism-multiculturalism dialectic

"Europe has not fully taken account of the dramatic changes taking place in Mediterranean societies and in Arab states in particular"

has revealed its limitations. The right to be different exists, but we should never lose sight of the most important difference: that of each individual.

One of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports on the Arab world clearly shows that almost 80% of the Arab population is in favour of democracy. People have expectations; there is real demand for political reform in these countries, where evidently fundamentalist minorities are also becoming stronger. It is for this reason that we need to make sure that individuals and civil societies in these countries can be heard. The starting point has to be the recognition of universal rights; certainly there is no longer any justification for a purely assimilationist model. The right path is still the one that favours rights, democracy and emancipation. Many roads lead to the modernity conceived by Western rationalism: we need to look beyond pluralism and the recognition of diversity as such and start again, for example with miscegenation or hybridisation. Furthermore, the West – if this term can still be used to define a political and cultural entity – is not self-sufficient. It cannot resolve the crucial question of global democracy alone.

Despite the continuing difficulties in taking European integration forward, our achievements so far may be of use in the search for dialogue. We have the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, incorporated into the draft Constitutional Treaty, which cannot be dismissed and the renegotiation of which is unthinkable. This approach is diametrically opposed to communitarism. It is based on the rights of the individual and not the community, since it is the individual who is protected, rather than his or her community.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights has provided an answer in the shape of full European citizenship and its extension to 'new' European citizens from the Arab-Muslim world. Of course, the road to a Euro-Mediterranean citizenship is long, but surely much of it depends on our ability, as Europeans, to integrate new citizens from that part of the world. In this sense then, the 'New Andalusia' – as Gilles Kepel defined it, taking us back more than

Pasqualina Napoletano

six centuries to a time when Spain was a land of integration between Muslims, Christians and Jews – represents European society today.

However, the internal dimension of the relationship with the peoples of the Mediterranean cannot ignore the political situation in the Middle East and Europe's role in the region. The end to the tragic conflict in Lebanon, with the decision to send a large third-party military force under the aegis of the United Nations to the south of the country, offers us a shred of hope and opens up new prospects. The fact that we have succeeded in obtaining a ceasefire is already an important result in a war that, in just a few weeks, has caused many deaths, destroyed infrastructure and the environment, and was threatening to engulf the whole region.

Resolution 1701 of the United Nations Security Council provides the political, diplomatic and military tools to support the Lebanese government in defending and establishing full sovereignty throughout the country. Until a few months ago, there was no guarantee of this, and images of the Lebanese army recapturing villages and towns in the south after decades was seen by everyone as a major step forward.

Hugely important for us is the fact that the new, reinforced UNIFIL mission is predominantly European. Perhaps we could have done more to give a more 'European flavour' to the UN mission, as we succeeded in doing recently in Congo. The European Union now has a direct and real interest in guaranteeing the stabilisation of the country and triggering a political process that will lead the way to a blanket peace agreement in the Middle East region.

The European Parliament has achieved a majority consensus on this, with an unequivocal position that respects the need to re-establish international law and the unconditional implementation of all UN resolutions. In Lebanon, we now need to consolidate the attempt at national dialogue and to prevent it from becoming even more fractured, since this could undermine the fragile institutional and political balance in the country. It is evident that this calls into

question the role of Hezbollah. Only full integration of this movement within the Lebanese political and institutional system could in fact contribute to real stabilisation of the situation. At the same time, the Lebanese army has to regain control of the whole country, including the south, and it has to be able to exercise a monopoly on military strength to the exclusion of Hezbollah, which in recent times has become a parallel power. The rebuilding of the country with the help of Europe and the international community will be aimed at safeguarding Lebanon's independence and sovereignty, in the spirit of the democratic process that raised so many hopes during the 'Beirut spring' in 2005.

Clearly all the pieces of the Middle Eastern mosaic are inextricably linked. Negotiations can only be reopened with the participation of all stakeholders in the region. As socialists, we are deeply aware of Europe's responsibility at this time. The dramatic war this summer with its toll of death and destruction has to be a warning for all of us. Once again we have seen that military force and militant violence are not the answers to the current dramatic crisis in the Middle East, at the heart of which lies the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We support the Palestinians' difficult internal process of forming a new government of national unity, unlocking the door to international aid for the Palestinian people and the possibility of talks with Israel. To see real progress in this area, the spiral of violence first needs to stop. The years of experience that we have acquired show that the two sides cannot do it alone: the international community's presence is essential. As with Lebanon, we need to consider sending an international peacekeeping mission to Gaza and the West Bank. This might be the key to an international peace conference on the Middle East, leading to a stable, lasting solution for the entire area. As European Socialists, our goal – as testified by the recent PSE Group mission to Damascus and Beirut – is to enter into dialogue with all parties and to bring about their reconciliation. We support the efforts of those European

Pasqualina Napoletano

governments that, with courage and determination, are pushing for Europe to have a leading role in the Middle East region.

Multilateralism can now be revived. It can be resurrected from the outcome of the recent conflict in Lebanon and from the now real possibility of a U-turn in US strategy and a withdrawal from the disastrous war in Iraq. This is an arduous challenge, requiring not only a military effort, but a political and diplomatic one, as well as the determination to play a constructive role in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, with the participation of all countries in the region, Iran and Syria included.

Only a few years ago, with the end of the Cold War, many people were under the illusion that the world had shed the fears and anxieties that for so long had influenced the dynamic and the portrayal of international relations. Unilateralism, with its sense of finality, seemed to be the theoretical corollary to this new phase. Iraq yesterday, Lebanon today. The end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might be in sight, but yet again we have seen that unilateralism is not the answer, and that there is only one solution for peace: hard work and commitment to dialogue and to the rule of law through influential and effective supranational institutions.

Jan Marinus Wiersma

Vice-President
of the Socialist Group

Having long treated the region as a peripheral issue, that required little more than a policy of reserved relation management, the European Union needs to start looking at the Mediterranean with other eyes. The region is more than just the southern rim of Europe's neighbourhood, where we can address difficulties on a case by case basis. It is one of the battlegrounds of world politics. An arena where complex issues such as the relation between economic development and migration, the challenge of establishing political legitimacy, international relations, energy politics, violent conflict, and the confrontation between cultures, meet and intersect.

The Mediterranean is strategically important for the European Union and its cautious rise on the European political agenda is long overdue. The EU needs to refocus part of its energy to develop a strategic agenda for its relations with this region. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Barcelona Process can certainly contribute towards Europe's aims in the region: deeper economic and political, cultural and security cooperation to strengthen stability, security and well-being. But important as legal approximation, technical cooperation and trade facilitation may be, these are insufficient to address the complex political issues the region faces.

We need a more politically developed agenda which aims at political reform and gradual democratisation. The development of stronger relations between Europe and the countries in the region

should be linked much more strongly to the interlinked objectives of responsive and representative government, transparency and respect for fundamental freedoms. In the end, these are the basic preconditions for genuine social and economic development.

I will set out some elements of such an agenda, but not before touching upon three interrelated issues that inevitably come up when doing so.

In the first place, do we have sufficient understanding of the local political context and dynamics? Our policies can only be successful if they are based on sound and in-depth analyses of the political and social structures in countries concerned.

Second, most of the countries in the Mediterranean region have majority Muslim populations. While firmly rejecting the notion that Islam should be an obstacle to political reform or modernisation, we have to explore the changing roles and potential of Islamic political and civil movements in Mediterranean politics. This would also help us distinguish between radicalism and reformism.

Thirdly, the distinction between external and internal is blurred. Our dialogue with and policies towards governments and societies in the region also has an impact on communities in our own societies. How can our policies contribute to defusing the 'clash of civilizations' that extremists at both sides are seeking?

Democratic transformation?

The problems in the countries around the Mediterranean are often framed as the result of cultural backwardness. This is both false and unproductive. The fundamental problem is political: with few exceptions, albeit to highly varying degrees, these countries are ruled by (semi-)authoritarian regimes, whose policies are out of sync with the needs and wishes of their populations.

Though none exercises the sort of total control that characterized communist dictatorships, these regimes rely on different combi-

nations of tradition, sectarianism, clientelism and repression to maintain their power base. Even though some of them enjoy fairly high levels of international legitimacy, corruption and lack of transparency hamper efficient government, which is a breeding ground for dissatisfaction.

These regimes are not completely unresponsive to popular wishes, but room for independent civil society and political opposition to influence policy making is limited. Freedom of expression and assembly is restricted while political pluralism is more often symbolic than real. That leaves few opportunities for open public debate or dissenting voices to develop into opposition movements that can successfully achieve political reform. In the meantime, social and economic needs of the population are not properly addressed.

Since the question is basically a political one, the answer lies in the political sphere as well. The strategic aim for the European Union should be to encourage real political reform, even if not pushing for liberal democracies. The strategy is threefold.

In the first place, lasting change will only come from below. Notwithstanding the unfavourable conditions, there is considerable political and civic activism. While the idea of democracy is becoming a topic of public debate, most regimes realise they have to take popular concerns on board if they want to survive and have begun doing so. We should take the opportunities this local dynamism presents and find ways to offer sustained support to independent civil society and reform minded political movements to help create room to operate and connect to like-minded organizations elsewhere. Circumstances vary too much for general recipes. This approach can only be successful if the EU develops the capacity to act in accordance with the local political context.

Secondly, the European Union and its Member States have to support this process from above by emphasising that genuine partnership can only be based on respect for certain basic values,

> **Europe thus needs a more strategic and political policy towards the Mediterranean countries**

including individual rights, freedom of religion, expression and assembly. While maintaining a constructive position, Europe should not shy away from criticism on political repression.

Thirdly, the benefits of closer relations with the European Union should be bigger and clearer, but they should also be linked more strongly to reforms. Technical cooperation, for instance on security issues or border management, is of considerable importance, but in general contributes little to political reform. The ENP offers a good starting point, but should progressively be refocused along this line.

Political Islam and political change

Islam inspires a wide and complex variety of cultural and political manifestations. Especially since 11 September 2001, many superficial accounts conclude that Islam is experiencing a general trend towards radicalisation. Although radical interpretations of Islam are certainly part of the reality we have to deal with, both within our own societies and in countries with a Muslim majority, the actual picture is endlessly more complex and varied.

Whereas the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan were indeed expressions of radical Islamic thought, and Saudi-Arabia and Pakistan each boast their own pacts between authoritarianism and stringent religiousness, Islamic political movements in countries such as Morocco, Algeria and Egypt increasingly shift away from 'revolutionary aims and means' and focus on more immediate and pragmatic political objectives. Another example is Turkey, where the moderately Islamic AK Party took the country closer to the European Union.

These movements try to achieve their goals within the confines of the existing political structures and have had some significant successes. In many countries, Islamic political parties are the most important and vocal — and sometimes even the only — opposition movements. Their ascendancy is partly related to the

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lack of success of the earlier liberal and socialist opposition movements in this region. While these proved neither able to accomplish the reforms they sought nor appealed to the wider population, Islamic movements occupied the political space between the continued popular desire for political reform and their country's unresponsive regimes.

The Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy's in depth study of this dynamic concluded that such 'Islamic activism' contains numerous reference points for democratization. We don't immediately have to embrace these movements as partners to recognize that they have a role to play and can make a positive contribution to political reforms when they are allowed participation in the political process.

At the same time, we need realistic expectations concerning pace, extent and depth of reforms. There will be no swift transition to Western style liberal democracy. We might want to focus more on local democracy and the social dimension, rather than seeking immediate wholesale reform of the political system. Nevertheless, meaningful progress is possible when we can succeed to contribute to the empowerment of moderate movements irrespective of their background. We can no longer exclusively put our hopes on liberal and secular parties alone. The time has come to explore the possibilities of political dialogue with Islamic political movements.

The EU also needs to redefine its relation with the (semi-)authoritarian regimes. There should be a clear and consistent line in our relations with the Mediterranean countries, taking gradual democratisation as our main objective. Western governments have long supported these for sake of stability. Pushing for more political freedom was thought to carry the danger of leading to a handover to hostile extremists. However, in countries where people have reason to complain about corruption, mismanagement and lack of political freedom, it is exactly authoritarianism that creates room for extremists. Democracy is the best way to give people a stake in the future of their country. As long as it is internationally

embedded and accompanied by the necessary support to achieve economic development and accountable government, it is the best guarantee for long term stability.

Dialogue between civilizations

Our relationship with the Mediterranean, as part of the Islamic world, is a complex and multilayered one. Although Europe is intimately linked to the region through its economies and immigrant communities, there is a lot of mutual suspicion. This suspicion is partly historically rooted, but has been greatly reinforced by the 'clash of civilizations'-scenario that has been staged since 11 September 2001, feeding the idea that the West and Islam are entangled in an ideological battle. Logically untenable, it is the worst possible starting point for future oriented dialogue.

Instead mutual understanding, the definition of common values and the search for a shared vision of our future have to be promoted. Therefore, we have to give our strong support to the idea of an 'alliance of civilizations', to counter the idea that the West and the Islamic world are condemned to a future of animosity. Governments will necessarily have to be involved. But, since we have to make sure our criticisms are not lost in the process, it might be even more important to enhance our dialogue with civil society organisations from the Mediterranean. This would provide them with a platform to share their vision and connect to each other, while it would offer us a chance to influence their agendas.

Such a dialogue should also impact on Muslim communities in our own societies, where the same mutual suspicion exists. Unfortunately, intercultural relations were affected by September 11 as well and have come under pressure in many EU countries. Although specific situations differ very much between Member States and our foreign policy will not solve integration issues on its own, it could be a great help for our internal intercultural dialogue if Europe is seen as a positive force in the world.

Jan Marinus Wiersma

At the same time, there is a link between a certain type of Islamic fundamentalism and violent radicalization. There is a real threat from terrorist organisations that justify violence from religious ideology. Violent radicalisation occurs both in the West and in the Islamic world and does not bother with international borders. It is a transnational phenomenon. To counter this, a combination of resolute action against active terrorist cells, policies that address the circumstance that underlie dissatisfaction and a more consistent international approach is necessary. It is a game of chess on three levels at the same time: in our relations with the Islamic world, with the Muslim communities in our own societies, and in our struggle against fundamentalist violence.

A European agenda for our Southern Neighbourhood

Europe thus needs a more strategic and political policy towards the Mediterranean countries. We have to develop a long-term agenda that focuses on political reform and democratisation and seizes the opportunities internal dynamics offer and try to create them where they lack, but always on the basis of a thorough understanding of the local situation. Our actions should cover all levels. We cannot limit ourselves to intergovernmental relations, but have to engage with civil society and political movements as well.

The European Union should combine a more consistent line of criticism to political repression with a gradual refocus of its external assistance programs. Conditionality should be more rigorously applied, but the benefits should be according. European democracy assistance, whether funded by the EU, member states or NGOs, could play an important role, provided it is more focused and coordinated. Governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as European political groups should explore the possibilities to enter into dialogue with Islamic movements, although this is bound to be a sensitive and difficult process.

Finally, to put some flesh on the 'alliance of civilizations'-initiative, we might explore the idea of a Helsinki-style conference for the Mediterranean region, that would address security issues as well as human and political rights. The outcome might give grass-roots movements the opportunity to take political reforms forward with reference the commitments of their own governments.

We need a more politically charged agenda which aims at political reform and gradual democratisation. The development of stronger relations between Europe and the countries in the region should be linked much more strongly to the interlinked objectives of responsive and representative government, transparency and respect for fundamental freedoms. In the end, these are the basic preconditions for genuine social and economic development.

In countries where people have reason to complain about corruption, mismanagement and lack of political freedom, it is exactly authoritarianism that creates room for extremists. Democracy is the best way to give people a stake in the future of their country.

Hannes Swoboda

Vice-President
of the Socialist Group

Europe's responsibility

Europe cannot delink itself from the past, the present and the future in the Middle East. The treatment of the Jewish population over centuries, its discrimination and many pogroms and finally the Nazis' policy of systematic extermination are all roots and supportive elements for the Zionist movement to found a new state, Israel, as a 'safe heaven' for the Jews.

But our obligation and support cannot be expressed only towards present day Israel, or the Jewish majority of Israel, but must be directed towards all the states and people of the Middle East. The founding of Israel was connected with the eviction of parts of the Arab population.

Furthermore colonisation and neo-colonial behaviour afterwards created much hardship and sufferings and a bad image of the West in the region. Just think of the British-French 'Suez adventure' just 50 years ago, of the US action – with support of the British – against the democratically elected government of Iran in 1953 and of the recent war in Iraq. These are just some examples of a long list of outside interventions, very often connected with the main resource of this region: oil.

Thus Europe, in particular the European Union, has an overall responsibility for helping the region and all its people to find peace, security and economic progress. But this is also a responsibility towards our own population because unresolved conflicts and economic deprivation support instability and terrorism in a region which is not only neighbouring Europe but is also critical to our energy supply.

Therefore, Europe has many reasons to take up its responsibility and especially to realize finally the basic UN resolution of 1947 with two states in the Palestinian region and that means today to create an independent and viable Palestine, which has the same rights for existence and security as Israel and which furthermore is a vital and necessary contribution to Israel's security. So, we have to fulfil our double obligation to Israel and Palestine in the interest of both.

And the US?

A strong and united European position is the more necessary the more the US position is one-sided and short-sighted. The grand design of a democratic Greater Middle East has broken down, not at last because of the not only unjustified but also catastrophic war in Iraq, unfortunately with help of some European countries. The intervention in Iraq helped the Shiite Iran to play a greater role in the region, as did the basically justified intervention in Afghanistan, but the US were unable to draw profit out of this in its relationship with Iran. So, what's left is a more and more uncritical support for Israel and less and less influence in the Arab world. As the former secretary of state James Baker stated: *"We have gone from calling the settlements illegal in the Carter administration, to calling them an obstacle to peace in the Reagan and (George H. W.) Bush administration, and now (under President Clinton) we are saying they are complicating and troubling"*. And now, with the present Bush administration, nearly everything what Israel does is accepted and supported. Especially the root cause of all the misery and conflict in the Middle East, the Palestinian question, is very much forgotten in spite of promises of President Bush towards Prime Minister Tony Blair. But as former national security adviser (with George H. W. Bush) Bent Scowcroft said: *"Hezbollah is not the source of the problem; it is a derivative of the cause, which is the tragic conflict over Palestine that began in 1948."*

And as Lawrence Freedman from Kings College London wrote recently, *"The continued misery of Palestine has been forgotten with the focus on Lebanon, and without a new international initiative, it is going to be even harder to find a political solution."*

In any case, the policy of the present Bush administration of neglecting the problem of Palestine, of uncritically support each Israeli government position – see the debate about the Israeli lobby in the US – of going for forced regime change in Iraq and at least of isolating Syria and Iran was not only unsuccessful, but it contributed to the present turmoil in the Middle East and the rise of radical and sometimes even terrorist movements. And what is true for the US-strategy is also true for the very one-sided strategies of Tony Blair in following the US course. In the strong words of Chris Patten: *"While Bush and Blair thumble and fiddle, Beirut burns."* And Jacques Chirac on the other hand is trying to isolate Syria out of pure personal reasons!

Overall what Robert Fisk wrote at the end of his book *The great war for Civilisation* in 2005 is as true as today: *"Israelis have a country – built on someone else's land, which is their tragedy as well as that of the Arabs – but its right wing governments, happily encouraged by that most right wing of American governments, are destroying all hope of the peace Israel's people deserve. When President Bush tells Israel that it can keep its major colonies on Palestinian land, he is helping to kill Israelis as well as Palestinians, because that colonial war will continue."*

Europe, on the other hand, must maintain and gain more influence in the region in the interest of progress and democratisation in the respective countries themselves, to the benefit of its own security and because this is the only effective way to help Israel. But we should also try to convince the US to return to a more balanced approach.

Hannes Swoboda

"Europe cannot delink itself from the past, the present and the future in the Middle East"

Guidelines for an EU strategy

1.) A new strategy for the Middle East cannot be successful without the US. But in times of rising doubts in the US public opinion and helpless activities by the US administration, a united Europe must lead the way. As Martin Wolf in the Financial Times wrote recently: *"The US alone can decide its future role. But Europeans can help, by becoming both more effective as allies and more united as critics."*

2.) The core problem of Palestine must no longer be neglected. To Israel there must be a clear message: Peace is not achieved by force and not unilaterally. As Avi Shlaim, the author of *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* wrote just before the ceasefire in Lebanon: "*Whether Israel ends this war in a better strategic position than the one from which it started remains to be seen. But no strategic gain would justify in moral terms the death and destruction that Israel has visited on its defenceless neighbour.*"

But the killing of many civilians, the destruction of the infrastructure and the arrests of democratically elected Palestinian representatives is not only morally unacceptable but is creating new hatred and new fanatics against Israel and their allies.

3.) All the countries and political groups concerned must be included in a political initiative to find a long lasting settlement. The US must give up its concept of vague states and regime change as the prime mover of its foreign policy.

As Thomas L. Friedman wrote recently: *"Five decades of America's isolating Cuba has produced five decades of Fidel Castro. As long as we maintain our ambiguity vis-à-vis Iran and North-Korea – regime changes or change in behaviour – they will maintain their ambiguity about their nuclear programs."*

And in a commentary in the Financial Times one can read concerning Iran: *"The US has edged towards talks, but set a killer precondition that Teheran must first abandon nuclear enrichment activity. But getting clarity and security on Iranian nuclear plans is only conceivable as part of a grand bargain that fully addresses*

Hannes Swoboda

Iran's status as a regional power and its legitimate security concerns."

There is no guarantee that a full involvement of Iran will change the attitude of that country towards the nuclear programme and towards peace in the Middle East including Hezbollah, but we have to try it and the same is true for Syria. (At least the example of Lybia gives us some hope.)

It must be clear and an important guiding principle for a strong European position that force, and especially force alone including unilaterally imposed solutions, cannot bring peace and security to the region. There must be negotiations with all parties concerned including Hamas, as many Israelis from politicians like Shlomo Ben-Ami to writers like David Grossmann recently stated. And General Uri Saguy, former head of the military secret service, said about the recent Lebanon war: *"This war should lead our leaders to an understanding of the limits of force and the necessity to reach a regional political agreement. Those who have a vision which divides the world in good and evil, only create new wars and destabilisation in the region."*

4.) This must not mean to give up any strategy of democratisation in the Middle East. In the contrary, we have to develop and continue a sophisticated strategy of enhancing democracy and civil society in all the countries of that region. But it must be clear that these changes cannot come from the outside but from the inside. Iraq shows us the way it cannot go. Support for credible NGOs and having as many channels of communication as possible is a precondition for a democratic development. So, we must accept a double strategy of involving the present government in finding a long term settlement of the main conflicts and working continuously to support pro-democracy develop-ments in the countries concerned.

We must not follow the simplistic and arrogant 'strategy' of the Bush administration but rather the line formulated by the former Secretary of State Madelaine Albright, for example in her recent

book *The Mighty & the Almighty*: *"As the world's most powerful democracy America should help others who desire help to establish and strengthen free institutions. But in so doing, we should remember that promoting democracy is a policy, not a mission, and policies must be tested on the hard ground of diplomacy, practical politics and respect for international norms."*

And we should also accept her undogmatic criteria for a successful policy: *"The test of whether an action is moral is not whether it conforms to some rigid principle, but whether it achieves a moral result."*

We should also remember what one of the leading democratic journalists of Iran, who had to spend six years in prison, Akhar Ganji has to say: *"Ours is a difficult struggle, it could even be a long one. Anyone who claims to posess a golden formula for bringing freedom to Iran, and claims that all he needs is foreign cash and foreign help to put this plans into effect is a swindler."*

5.) A strong military presence of an international force under a clear and forceful UN-mandate will be necessary. Europe will have to play an important role in this force, but especially Arab participation would be welcome. But no peacekeeping force can be successful without clear determination of all political elements in the region to find a final settlement of all the conflicts on the basis of compromises but with respect for self-determination and the security interests of all people in the region. As Lee Feinstein recently wrote about peacekeeping in Lebanon: *"The role of an international force in Lebanon is fundamentally political. The force needs to be seen as advancing an overall political approach which realistically must include the affected states in the region, including Syria and Iran. An international force dispatched to Lebanon can buy time and create political space. It cannot win an unwinable war and, if dispatched to do so, is damned to fail."*

That is true for a peacekeeping force in Lebanon, the same is true for a necessary peacekeeping force concerning Palestine.

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Only a strong political framework can give international peace-keeping forces the chance of success. And here comes Europe's decisive role. As Anatol Lieven writes: *"Although it may seem harsh to say so, an international peacekeeping force for southern Lebanon under the terms so far proposed amounts to helping Israel avoid having to confront the fact that its strategy has failed, and avowing having to engage in a very painful but absolutely essential national debate about what to do instead. This is not in the long-term interest of Europe, the Middle East, the United States – or indeed in the long run, Israel itself.*

Instead the Europeans should recognize that for the first time in many years, the increasingly visible failure of Israel and America strategy, and Tel Aviv and Washington's need for outside help, have given Europe real leverage. They should press their advantage relentlessly to help bring about a real solution to the Middle East's manifold and interlinked conflicts."

6.) One of the main objectives of a comprehensive European strategy is, in the words of Olivier Roy, *"to counter the synergy between Arab nationalism, Sunni militancy and Shia crescents, which will link battlefields from Afghanistan to Lebanon."*

To prevent this synergy with all its devastating effects on the security of Europe, we must develop a much more sophisticated strategy in bringing Hamas and Hezbollah to the negotiation table and giving them a political role and real responsibility for their people. We must respect Iran's regional role but also limit it in cooperation with – Sunni – Arab governments in the region, which have no interest in a dominant – Shia – Iran. Parallel to the political engagement of existing governments, we have to strengthen civil societies in the countries of the region on the long road to full democracy.

Finally, we must convince Israel – again in the words of Olivier Roy – to *"renounce its policy of 'bunkerisation' withdrawing behind a fortified border and hammering at any perceived threat"*.

No strategy for the Middle East can guarantee success, but it is obvious that the past, very often helpless and haphazard activities did not bring success. So, Europe should try a different course of a more visionary and comprehensive approach, an approach which would be called a strategy.

Abdullah Abdullah

Chairman of the Political Committee
of the Palestinian Legislative Council

Six months after the assassination of the late Itzhak Rabin, four American Jewish leaders wrote a letter to the newly-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahou advising him on the following: "*Abandon the Oslo peace process, press for the attack on Iraq, isolate Syria, and the problems of Israel will come to an end*." The war in Lebanon a month ago proved the danger of this advice and the faulty appraisal of the situation in our region, concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The war on the Israeli-Lebanese border proved three conclusions. One, there is no military solution to the conflicts in the Middle East. The Israeli army, which was viewed as the strongest army in the region, could not achieve any victory against Hizbollah. Second, there are no unilateral solutions to the crises in the region. These solutions bring only a temporary lull, which is followed by a new cycle of violence. The unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, and likewise the unilateral withdrawal in September last year from Gaza, were not solutions to the conflict between Israel and the neighbouring countries but rather a waiting period for the eruption of a new cycle of violence. Third, the crisis in the Middle-East is to be solved, and we must tackle and solve the root cause of this crisis, which is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Given these three lessons, how can we make good use of them and try to benefit and save blood on both sides, i.e. the Israeli side as well as in the neighbouring Arab countries? This is dependent on the Israeli policy. Since the assassination of the former Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin, Israeli leaders were never discussing peace with the Palestinians but they were always discussing

peace with themselves. Shlomo Gazit, a former Israeli military chief acknowledged in his book *Crazies in a trap* that no Israeli leader ever believed in, or accepted the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination or statehood.

It is the demographic imperative against the geographic imperative. Some Israeli leaders want to keep the Palestinian land but subjugate the indigenous Palestinians as second-class citizens in their land while other leaders want to get rid of the Palestinian population with the least possible land and annex the largest area of that land to Israel. Of course, there is a third option, as well. This week, Effi Eitam, leader of the Israeli National Religious Party, introduced a new solution to the conflict: the transfer of all the Palestinian Arabs from the West Bank. These are not recipes for a peace, they are recipes for a continued conflict in the region.

Without going into details on the developments in the Israeli policy, I will make two short remarks. Israel continued the building of settlements, despite the signing of the Oslo Agreement and despite the acceptance of the Road Map in 2003, which in the first lines of the first paragraph says: "*stop all settlement building including the natural growth of the population in these settlements*". This was suggested earlier also in a document called the 'Tenet understanding', after the former CIA director who came to the Middle East and submitted his report. Despite all these recommendations, the creeping of land confiscation and the expansion of settlements increased to the level where 50% of the settlements were built after the signing of the Oslo Agreement, in addition to these days' announcement of building further 700 units in two major settlements around the city of Jerusalem.

These practices do not contribute to peace in the region. Israel benefited from the 11 September terrorist attacks. Israel was quite successful in calling at least a group of Palestinians "terrorists" and claiming the Palestinians are no partner for peace, while the Palestinians are the ones who were continuously confirming their readiness to achieve peace based on the same

principles of the Madrid Conference and the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The Road Map was the last plan for peace, which the Palestinians accepted unconditionally while Israel had fourteen reservations on it, which led an American commentator to comment: "*after fourteen reservations there is no more road and no more map left.*"

Now Israel is trying to exploit the new elections in Palestine where Hamas got the majority in the Legislative Council. Everybody was claiming democracy as the only way to improve the situation in the Middle East. Democracy is entrenched in our blood and in our practice. But the conclusion, the outcome of this democracy is that Hamas has the majority. Hamas, of course, has a different political programme than the consensual Palestinian national political program. Now everybody is asking the Palestinians to the recognition of Israel and the denouncement of violence, but nobody is asking Israel to conform to the accepted norms and principles of peace outlined in the various plans such as the Road Map, the Arab peace initiative, the Security Council resolutions, or stop its attacks on the Palestinians, the confiscation of their land, and the recognition of their right to independence and statehood.

We were forced to be subjected to collective punishment: political isolation and economic blockade. Sanctions were imposed on us. These sanctions are not harming members of Hamas but they are harming all Palestinian individuals, the child who goes to school, the sick who goes to hospital, the labourer who goes to work, and the public servant who goes to his office. These are the ones who are harmed by the sanctions. This is not the right way to peace. This rather brings thoughts of rejection, resentment and extremism.

Feeling the responsibility of finding individuals, groups, countries or political parties, like yours, we do believe wholeheartedly in achieving peace with our neighbours. We are committed to having peace with Israel, to live side by side with them, but we will never accept them to live instead of us. The occupation of Israel must

Abdullah Abdullah

> "We do believe
> wholeheartedly
> in achieving peace
> with our neighbours"

end. We need to be free from that occupation. And this means to enjoy our right to self-determination and to have a state of our own in the territories occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital and a solution to the refugee question based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

When it comes to changing the political atmosphere, changing the political platform, changing the attitude of Hamas, our President was successful in ushering Hamas through four stages. After his election, on 9 January 2005, President Mahmoud Abbas had Hamas to agree to a calm period of one year. The Israeli response was: "this is only a Palestinian decision and it does not interest us". Israel continued attacking Palestinians and your Parliament passed several resolutions against targeted killing, against blockades, against road blocks, against humiliation of Palestinians, confiscation of land, building more settlements and continuing the building of that racist separation wall, which separates Palestinians, from Palestinians in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of justice.

Hamas, which was against the entire political system in Palestine, was opposed to the principle of negotiation. It was opposed to the recognition of Israel. But in our national dialogue, after the elections, our President was successful in bringing Hamas to agree on a platform, which we called the National Consensus Document, that contains all the requirements of peace that were in the past documents. Hamas has become part of the Palestinian political system.

The President went one step further. On 12 September he had Hamas to agree on three basic points that answered all the requirements of the international community. Concerning the previous agreements that the PLO signed, the document states that the new national unity government honours all documents signed by the PLO, as the political term of reference for the Palestinian National Authority. He managed to advance Hamas' position concerning the recognition of Israel. Although Hamas has an argument that if Israel does not recognise Palestine, does

not accept the right of the Palestinians to have a state of their own, as it is outlined in the Road Map, why should we recognize a priori Israel? Recognition should be mutual. Since 25 June this year, the arrest of the Israeli soldier in the battlefield, 248 Palestinians were killed and only two Israeli soldiers were killed. Who is then carrying out violent attacks against the other?

In addition, the Palestinian National Council met in 1996 in a special session in Gaza and amended all articles that were not in conformity with the aim of achieving peace with Israel. When Prime Minister Netanyahu came to power one or two months later, he insisted that this amendment was incomplete, so we had to meet again. In December 1998, President Clinton himself was present in Gaza and the Council met again to reaffirm the amendment of these articles. I think, there is no strong argument in Israel about the Palestinian commitment to achieving peace.

There are resolutions of the UN, there is international law, there is the Arab peace initiative and there is the Road Map. All this is as a frame of reference for a future peace process. Tomorrow, there will be a request presented to the Security Council by the Arab group asking the Security Council to find a mechanism of how to implement the Road Map and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the Middle East conflict. Here we need Europe and the EU to take a strong position in supporting that request. There is also a request for an international peace conference to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conference should be based on its end objective which is ending the Israeli occupation and the creation of an independent Palestinian state, as described in the words of President Bush himself: "*a state that is viable, territorially contiguous in the territories occupied in 1967.*"

Europe can support this move and push, as a third party, for the application of international legality. If this is left to the Palestinians and the Israelis, it is very difficult that the Israelis, the occupiers, will concede. I am afraid that there will be more than one Israeli leader asking not only to transfer the Palestinians but probably to

annihilate them. We need the intervention of Europe that has a strong interest in playing that role because of its proximity. Stability and peace in the region will definitely benefit Europe and will help the peoples of the region, Palestinians, Israelis and Arabs. In this case, we will be in a win-win situation. But if this never happens, I am afraid, we have to find ourselves in more conflicts that will affect the whole region and beyond. Let us act now to make sure that justice triumphs and peace prevails.

Abdullah Abdullah

Joseph Bahout

Senior Adviser of the Middle East
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Like several of the previous speakers, I believe that there is much to be learnt from the war we went through this summer in Lebanon and that it demonstrated several things. First of all, of course, it showed the futility of violence and the pointlessness and fruitlessness of any military solution to conflicts such as that experienced by the Middle East for more than forty years. But what it has also shown above all is the quasi-organic link that exists between the region's various conflicts. For a few years, it has for example been very much in vogue to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Arab conflict losing its centrality and being gradually replaced by other types of conflict in the region, such as conflicts between Islam and the West, intra-Islamic and intra-Arab conflicts or even conflict between the Persian world and the Arab world, etc.

Though these conflicts are relevant each in their own way, all of them, be it Iranian nuclear power, the conflicts that are now setting the various forms of extremism against Western modernity, or the conflict in South Lebanon, are ultimately struck from one and the same mould, which in a sense is the Middle East's founding historic conflict, namely the Israeli-Arab conflict.

This war therefore also showed the futility of trying to separate out crises in order to deal with them one by one. It showed that there was a system of free flowing exchange at least as regards violence between all of these conflicts, or at least between all the messages of crisis or all the messages of violence which feed one another.

While this war showed these things, it also opened up a multitude of perspectives and raised a multitude of questions. It would no doubt take too long here to go into the numerous questions along the lines of 'Who really won the war this summer?', 'Who really lost it?' I believe these are certainly very important questions, but they require an extremely detailed answer. Another question that was

probably also raised by this conflict, was how to integrate, how to deal with, how to negotiate with the para-state actors in this region, who are definitely becoming the main actors in the political conflict. It seems that this is one of the main characteristics of the new conflict in the way it is changing in the Middle East, with Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon and other groups elsewhere, for example in Iraq. A real question for the politicians therefore is 'How, in appearance at least, to make room for quasi-state, para-state or sometimes anti-state actors?'

The third question which must also be asked, and this is the one that I would like to reflect on, is the question of knowing whether we are heading towards a second round, as certain people are now saying; whether this summer's war in Lebanon was a sort of dress rehearsal, a sort of rough draft for other wars to come and whether we are today heading more towards a kind of arc of crisis, an arc of conflict stretching from the southern suburb of Beirut to the Iran-Afghan or Iran-Pakistan borders; or whether, on the contrary, we are heading towards a kind of package deal and global solution, such as Mr Schulz called for just now?

In order to reflect on that, I would like to focus on the legal and diplomatic mechanism that put an end to this 32, 33 or 34 day war in Lebanon (34 days since, as you know, the war continued beyond the official announcement of the cessation of hostilities). This mechanism is the famous United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, adopted on 11 August 2006.

For some years, mainly in the Middle East, there has been a sort of new 'breed' of UN resolution that seems to have been unveiled with the war in Iraq, but which in particular we have seen applied in a strange way over Lebanese soil. I am mainly thinking of the Resolution 1559, which was a multifaceted and multidimensional resolution bringing together several crises at once. Since it has become obvious that the crises are linked, it might have been thought that in a sense this type of resolution, by bringing all of the crises together, could help to resolve them all in one go. In fact, it was nothing of the sort. I am afraid that the Resolution 1701, which very much resembles Resolution 1559 in its structure or in its legal 'morphology', may experience more or less the same

troubles and the same misfortunes. Today there are at least four interpretations being used of the same Resolution 1701.

There is, of course, excuse this metaphor, 'the Good Lord's interpretation', i.e. the interpretation of the UN which created Resolution 1701. It is the most strictly legal and literal interpretation, the interpretation which sticks to the text of the resolution and its provisions. Let us put it to one side because we know that this is not where the future of the conflict will take place.

On the other hand, there is the minimalist and fairly cautious interpretation of Resolution 1701 by the Lebanese Government. It is the interpretation which the Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora wanted to present at the Rome Conference and then at all the other conferences. This interpretation of Resolution 1701 came as close as possible to the famous 'seven points' that he extolled, and it is some sort of solution acceptable to all, Israelis, American and European Westerners, and among the Lebanese. This is a sort of 'wishful thinking' that was impossible to achieve. But above all I think that the two interpretations that will probably weigh on the Middle East situation in the months and years to come are the two other interpretations of Resolution 1701.

The one which Hezbollah — as a para-state actor which has practically become a quasi-autonomous actor on the Middle East and Lebanese political scene — wishes to attach to this Resolution and the interpretation that Israel wishes to attach to it. There is a struggle opening up over the interpretation of the reality and not the text of Resolution 1701 today and it is probably the political and geopolitical context in which we will live for the months and years ahead.

An Israeli interpretation of Resolution 1701 would aim to change it and draw more results from its application than there are in the text. It would try to obtain in the application what could not be obtained on the field of conflict during the 33 days of war. Overall, the Resolution would at once be a mechanism for quarantining Lebanese territory (it can be pretty much seen in the type of deployment of the international force) and, secondly, it would in some way include the more or less coercive disarmament of Hezbollah.

Joseph Bahout

"It has become clear that if an organic link exists between all these conflicts, then there is a need for a solution linked to all crises **"**

Thirdly, and this is probably more the American interpretation than the Israeli one, Resolution 1701 should serve as a mechanism to isolate Lebanon from the arc of crisis in the region, and particularly from the coming crisis in the minds of the Americans, namely the Syrian-Iranian and/or Syrian and Iranian crisis, according to circumstances. With regard to that, Hezbollah's interpretation of Resolution 1701 is a simple mechanism for protecting Lebanon and civilians in Lebanon, and for supporting the Lebanese army, given that this Lebanese army takes its decisions or orders from a political authority of which Hezbollah is an integral part, if not the main and the censoring part.

Partly due to this it seems that the political and diplomatic – and perhaps even one day military – fight or struggle will develop in the coming months. In a few thoughts about the prospects for future scenarios, I would like to look at two main points that feed what you will excuse me for calling my deep pessimism about possible developments regarding this Lebanese-Israeli and, more widely, Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian-Israeli situation. My pessimism derives from two things.

First of all, in the context of this struggle on the interpretation of Resolution 1701, everything that is happening today and will continue to happen in relation to the very nature of the international force. I think that today there is an almost mechanical shift set in motion by the very fact that this multinational force is extremely well equipped and dense in numbers (we are talking about around 15000 men) and heavily armed; therefore there is inevitably already a mechanical shift towards a kind of force that is pretty much a military one and not a peacekeeping one. That is a force that could one day be closer to a Chapter 7-type mission, or could resemble such a mission.

Secondly, there is a shift, this time not mechanical but proactive, and driven (and I think that the facts on the ground increasingly show this) by certain European actors, but above all by the United States, which is in fact the hidden sponsor of Resolution 1701 (and perhaps the hidden command of the multinational force set up as it would like). There is a shift towards actually including surveillance missions in this international force's assignment. That's where the quarantining of the Lebanese territory and the

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surveillance of the Syrian-Lebanese border and the maritime borders come in. This would then lead to gradually taking the international force out of the only area of planned operations. The area south of the Litani River, in a kind of gradual but potentially dangerous and war-inducing slide, with of course a gradual shift in the interpretation of Resolution 1701 towards an increasingly constraining resolution, which would lead it precisely to something Chapter 7-like and more of a force of coercion in the region.

I would not like to go any further into possible future scenarios, but if that were the case, it would be necessary to start seriously considering the capacity to respond and the type of response of actors who will be – or who will perceive themselves to be – wronged by this type of situation. We are, of course, thinking of Syria and Iran, that is to say the actors who have a potential for trouble-making; but also of actors who today are still fairly absent from the Lebanese scene, such as for example certain small Palestinian groups, perhaps even one day Hamas, or even other radical Lebanese factions. If that were the case, I think that one should not forget the disastrous and unfortunate example of 1983-84 and what another multinational force in Lebanon experi- enced, that is a sort of rollback that was implemented from that period. It must be recalled, and in this is an irony of history, that it was precisely during this period of turmoil that Hezbollah took shape and began to exist on the Lebanese and regional political scene. Those are therefore the first grounds for potential pessimism.

The second grounds for pessimism come from the internal Lebanese scene and the impact that this summer's war had on it. It is clear that, since Resolution 1559 (and there too we encounter the harmful side of this type of resolution), a very deep rift has occurred in Lebanon. This rift, of course, in some way fed this summer's war but it also has in part been fed by this summer's war. It did so since the rift established by Resolution 1559 in the Lebanese territory, was largely a rift between on the one hand those who were saying 'It is time to put an end to the conflict, at least to the Lebanon-Israel angle, it is time to put away the weapons, it is time to move on to something else…', against

another political line which was saying 'As long as the Israeli-Arab conflict continues, as long as regional conflicts are not dealt with, there is cause for resistance and therefore, weapons will continue to do the talking'. The confrontation between these two lines thus partly fed this summer's war, but that war – and there we need to think about who won it and who lost it – in a way feeds, heightens and expands the confrontation on the Lebanese territory.

Today there is a strong risk on the internal Lebanese scene that some political parties – here I am thinking in particular of extreme elements within the political majority – will be tempted to use both the legal framework of Resolution 1701 and the military framework of the international force as an additional tool in the internal political struggle in the country. This is also something that we are beginning to see developing today which, in return, will be sure to stir up the internal conflict in Lebanon and so put Resolution 1701 on an extremely unsteady base since, in order to be genuinely and soundly applied, Resolution 1701 requires a stable and fairly viable Lebanese body politic. But on the other hand, if the Lebanese conflict came back to the forefront, it could foster mechanisms of the 1983-84-type, that again become elements leading to belligerence in the entire region. This has the makings of a vicious circle. As evidence for these two risks, I think it is necessary to reflect seriously on two sets of obstacles that are informing and will inform the situation in the Middle East for the months – probably the two years – to come.

A first series of internal obstacles, on which the Lebanese political equilibrium will play and be determined (and from the moment an international force like UNIFIL-plus exists in Lebanon, this force will be influenced and marked by Lebanese developments), are on the one hand the international inquiry into the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and the International Tribunal, with the direct involvement of Syria. And the second internal issue is the question of the Lebanese Presidency. The presidential election now less than a year away, next September, with Hezbollah and a Shiite community that today wish to see a return to internal Lebanese equilibrium. This set of obstacles should be observed fairly carefully because it will inform the viability and the future of Lebanese political life, and therefore in a certain way the Lebanese

environment in which UNIFIL operates. The two regional obstacles, are of course the Syrian and the Iranian issues. Whether or not to isolate the Syrian regime, the question of maintaining its strangulation by means first of all of the tangle of Resolution 1559, and then the matter of the International Tribunal. Of course, the second great regional obstacle is the one of Iranian nuclear power, with this matter beginning to go into a circle of crisis in the UN Security Council, with the United States probably increasingly wanting to move towards sanctions on this matter.

In conclusion, I would say that if we agree that the war showed an organic link between all these conflicts, it has become clear that if an organic link exists, then there is a need for a solution linked to all the crises. There is a need for a global solution. Therefore political slogans of the 'Lebanon first', 'Syria first', and 'Palestine-first' type are rather empty in character. As we now know, and the experience and the failures of the peace process have shown – be it the failure of Madrid, the failure of Oslo or the failure of the Road Map – all these have shown that it was useless and even counter-productive, indeed even lethal and fatal for the peace process and for the region in any case, to try to separate out the crises but also and in particular to play one 'track' against another. If, then, there is a global quality to solutions, there is inevitably a need to reinte-grate the actors into the political game who possess a certain capacity for nuisance trouble-making and whose only political resource is perhaps in the end precisely their potential for trouble-making. It is not a moral issue or an ethical issue. It is now a matter of integrating this perception, while of course not submitting to the logic of these actors; it is a matter of really reflecting on the best way to integrate all these actors in a negotiated solution.

This is precisely where we can genuinely and without naivety,even if what I am saying depends very much on hope, transform this war of summer 2006 and the internationalisation of the Lebanese territory into something positive and a chance for peace. This is where Europe really has a role to play insofar as – and this is a fact on which you, Europeans, must reflect – UNIFIL is very largely a European force. Today, in contrast to the 1990s, when Europe was in a sense the passive spectator of a peace process in which the

Americans were the main actors and in which the Americans gave Europe the role of 'payers' and not of 'players', there is a real lever, a military lever, a human lever able to give Europe a vocal and a real role in restarting a peace process. And so perhaps one of the only positive things to come out of this summer's crisis is to have reintroduced the true political Europe into the Middle East conflict. This being so, why not make use of it?

It is precisely for this reason, at least, that I would hail the initiative that was taken by the Socialist Group to go to the region, to talk to the actors in the conflict, but also to talk to the actors who can prevent it going round in circles, i.e. the actors who have a potential for trouble-making (and talking with actors does not mean submitting to their wishes, it is at least listening to what they have to say and just seeing how they can be reintegrated and tied into a political process, as Béatrice Patrie said; so as to set in motion a virtuous circle from what has so far been a vicious circle).

Of course, this can be said in a cynical way by saying that today this is at least an operational necessity, since it is the only way to protect UNIFIL-plus and make it feel secure during operations. It is, if you like, the stopgap argument, but one must not confine oneself to that; one must also get back on the path to multilateralism in the region, since it is the only way to avoid something that would duplicate this summer's war in Lebanon, in Iran, in Iraq or elsewhere, and which would avoid increasing the fields of confrontation and the fields of experimentation in this region of the world, which the policy of George Bush suggests are likely.

I believe that if Socialists have at least something to do with world peace, and need we mention that this is the Socialist mission par excellence, it is therefore further reason to hail the initiative taken recently and the conference which brings us together this evening.

Joseph Bahout

Einat Wilf

Israeli Labour Party

One of the remarkable aspects of the events of summer 2006 in Israel is that as time goes by things become less clear rather than more. The fog of war is getting thicker even as the war recedes. There is a lack of ability even to agree on the basic vocabulary of the war. There is no language yet to speak of it and some of the most basic questions about it remain open:

Question 1: What was it that took place between July 12th and August 14th? Was it a war? It wasn't declared as such, yet everyone calls it a war. Was it an outbreak of hostilities, one of many in a long history? Or perhaps just more intense incidents of fighting?

Question 2: Who and what was Israel fighting? Was it Hizbullah or Lebanon? Was it fighting terrorists or soldiers? One Israeli reserve soldier was taped arguing that by insisting on calling the Hizbullah fighters terrorists rather than soldiers the top commanders of the IDF created a false expectation and underestimation of the enemy that served Israeli soldiers ill. Perhaps Israel was fighting the southern command of the Iranian army as some have argued? And how about the question of civilians — where does the line pass between civilians and fighters in this kind of war? Should this distinction be modified in favor of a spectrum as Derschowitz suggested in which some civilians are more innocent than others?

Question 3: What was Israel fighting for and why? Was it to free the two kidnapped soldiers? If so, was it the best way to do so? Was it to re-establish Israel's deterrent power? If so, was not Israel's deterrent power diminished rather than enhanced by the time the ceasefire kicked in? Was it to change the Middle East? If so, how has it changed and was it for the better?

> **The war erupted against the background of a deep overhaul of the political scene**

Question 4: Now that it's over, how did it end? Was it a victory or defeat for Israel? Is it a great victory yet unrecognized, as some argue, or is it the greatest defeat ever suffered by the IDF, as others argue? Is this a zero-sum game in which one side's defeat is necessarily another's victory? And if it wasn't a clear victory, were there still achievements? What were the achievements and were there more achievements than failures? Regarding failures – were there more failures than is normal for any war, or did the media blow every failure out of proportion creating an exaggerated sense of chaos failure?

Question 5: Looking into the future: was the war an end or a beginning? Has it closed the window for peace that opened in early 1990's for at least a generation to come by renewing Arab hope that Israel can be defeated by force, or has it actually by humbling Israel created a new opportunity for peacemaking in the Middle East?

It is remarkable that the passage of time is only making these questions more pronounced. As the Israeli public seeks to learn lessons from all that has happened it finds itself hindered by the fact the Israelis and many others can't even agree what it is that actually took place this past summer.

The war erupted against the background of a deep overhaul of the political scene with the crushing of the Likkud, the establishment of Kadima and the creation of a center-left coalition between Kadima and the Labor Party. Immediately following the elections it seemed that several key new messages emerged:

The agenda became more civilian and social-economic. The rise of Amir Peretz to the chairmanship of the Labor Party with his emphasis on the social and economic issues in Israel was seen as heralding a new age in which social and economic issues would be at least as important as security issues. The election of Ehud Olmert to Prime Minister and the absence of former generals in any important ministry, including Defense, seemed to herald a new age of civilian politics.

Unilateralism also appeared to be the way forward. The withdrawal from Lebanon was generally considered to have been a success, bringing peace and quiet to Israel's north and taking the edge off Hizbollah's claim to legitimate resistance. Disengagement, while increasingly problematic due to the barrage of Kassam rockets on Sderot was considered to have substantially improved Israel's international standing. Kadima was voted in to carry out a third withdrawal in the West Bank, thereby nearly completing the process of unilaterally determining Israel's borders.

These messages were accompanied by what was seen as a defeat of the right and its paranoid visions of the future. In the aftermath of the war much of this picture has been overturned. The civilian and economic agenda has taken a backseat, if not disappeared altogether. The high costs of the war, the reparations for the north, the future reconstruction costs, and the need to rebuild Israel's military strength have make the 2007 budget into a security budget with almost no room for advancing social and economic issues. Even as the war exposed many of the social and economic problems in Israel and the gaps between those who could afford to flee the north and those who were left at the mercy of dysfunctional social services, it has robbed this agenda of its power.

In addition, the civilian moment is gone. The phrase that "Israel is not Switzerland" is being heard again. Many Israelis are arguing that given Israel's "neighborhood", there is no room for an inexperienced civilian Minister of Defense. The fact that Amir Peretz himself, who initially embodied the rise of the civilian and social-economic agenda has chosen to be Defense Minister and to preside over the war, had symbolized, more than anything, the end of the civilian moment.

Unilateralism is yet another political casualty of the war. The withdrawal from Lebanon is no longer considered a clear success and practically no-one is willing to turn over the West Bank to the launching of missile attacks against population centers in the center of Israel. Yet, it is not clear what will replace unilateralism. For now, it doesn't seem to be negotiations, which leaves Israel with no plan for action.

The right too has been substantially strengthened. The marking of one-year for, which took place during the war, although muted, was a big "We Told You So" moment from the right wing of the spectrum.

It is important to remember that Israelis always carry a sense of existential fear whereby the whole Zionist project could disappear in no-time. Whether it is the burden of history or the constant threat of the present, the existential fear is always there. Sometimes it is relegated to the back of the Israeli collective mind and sometimes it is propelled to the front of the mind. This sense of existential fear and the fragility of Israel's existence have been brought to the fore by the war. When fear is strong, so is the political right.

Finally, all this is taking place against a complete breakdown of faith in Israel's leadership and its capability to assume the load of leading a nation that faces as many challenges as Israel. The crisis is so deep that at the same time that many Israelis are calling upon the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister to quit, they express no hope that their successors would be any better. The loss of faith in the leadership and the disappearance of a plan for action have led to political confusion that is manifested in political fragmentation. According to recent polls, if elections were to be held today, no party would get more than 20 seats in the 120-seat Israeli parliament. The system has never been this fragmented.

The combination of strong sense of the urgency and magnitude of the threats to Israel's existence, together with the loss of faith in the competence of the leadership to lead Israel to safety, is responsible for much of the sense of gloom and depression that is currently engulfing Israel.

Azza Karam

Senior Adviser of the United Nations
Development Programme (UNDP)

The ideas shared here do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the United Nations Development Programme for Arab States. The following opinions are personal and most of them are based on the experience of several years of work. There are many points in common with the Socialist Group's main thoughts, as articulated in the key points that were shared on this panel. For instance, the fact that there is no 'clash of civilizations' or religious issues, and that problems with religion and conflicts of religion are not the main and important points in contemporary dynamics. Hence, the thoughts presented here are meant to be somewhat provocative.

There are main points to make.

1. The first point is essentially relating to the dynamics between politics and religion in the so-called 'Muslim world'. It should be mentioned that it is really not very clear to me what the 'Muslim world' is. Additionally, if we start referring to a part of the world as the Muslim world, what is the other part of the world? And if we do make such references, while claiming that we do not believe in a world being distinguished along religious lines, then why are we referring to, and distinguishing parts of the world in religious terminology? If we look at the dynamics of religion and politics in the Muslim-majority part of the world, we will realize that this development is not an *internal* dynamic of a relationship between politics and religion. It is a dynamic which is intimately connected to the external developments.

The UNDP Arab Human Development Report has emphasized and traced that very clearly. It is difficult to speak about a general development in the context of the Arab world without looking at the foreign policy of the major world powers and how that impacts on the Arab region economically, politically and culturally. There is no dynamic of religion and politics taking place in the Arab region,

which is independent of what is happening outside of the Arab region. In other words, there is a collective responsibility of those actors outside the Muslim-dominated world which shapes and forms the interaction of religion and politics. and the manifestation thereof.

All of us are aware of the history of engagement of this external impact, starting from the colonial era in most recent history. Many people in the Arab region referred to contemporary developments as neo-colonialist experiences. These are critical issues for understanding what is happening and how to react to it.

2. Fundamentalism itself is not a problem. Nor should it be one. Fundamentalism does not equal Islamism or political Islam, and has to be distinguished from it. In my book on *Transnational Political Islam*, I have argued that there is a strong distinction to be made between those who, in their own religious beliefs, are oriented on a personal, social and cultural level towards being fundamental in their interpretation, and those who will sort out their own personal issues in their lives using religious text. Religious texts (interpretation, stories of prophets, etc.) become the most important way of understanding and acting in their lives. For many fundamentalist movements around the world, sticking to the 'fundaments' in your own lives does not necessarily translate into being politically active. You could be a fundamentalist at any moment in terms of beliefs and pattern systems, but this does not mean you are automatically politically active or even interested in politics.

Some fundamentalists tend to be involved in Islamist political movements, many however do not. Today in many parts of the Arab world a number of Islamist politicians come from former communist and socialist political convictions. This should not be ignored. These people did not have a grand and sudden realisation that they had been wrong all along, and decided to embrace Islam. They were Muslims all their life, but they have also maintained some very secular adherence all their lives. They

realised there was a gap between what they were believing, and the dialectics thereof, and how the political Islamic context seems to be more appropriate to that dialectic.

3. The third point is concerning the continuum of political Islam. There is a continuum of political thinking all over the world, but the focus will be on the Arab region at the moment. There is a continuum of political thinking between extreme secular politics on the one end and religious right-wing politics on the other. In-between are many variations. Most Islamist organizations and ideologues will agree on the need to have an Islamic state and the islamisation of society. *How* they will achieve these objectives and how these Islamic states precisely will look like, varies significantly from one group or actor to the other. It is blatantly incorrect to say that the Muslim Brotherhood for instance, espouses the same methodology and ideas as Al-Qaeda. Differences in ideology, ambitions and expectations may be subtle, but differences in the methodologies are glaring. Seeing them all as one and the same is a serious error of perception and therefore by implication an error of engagement and interaction, or lack thereof.

It is important to appreciate that *radical* Islamism is what should be problematised. Why? Because it is possible, feasible and indeed necessary that *moderate* Islamists can be engaged with you in a very constructive dialogue, which would be different from what we see with the Bush-administration and to some extent also the Blair-government (which I cannot help but foresee to be changing relatively soon). I think your particular Group, the European Socialists, have an advantage over a number of other political currents in Europe because you are yourself calling for this engagement with the moderates. Thus, it is important to distinguish this diversity of Islamist engagement and enable an identification of potential interlocutors or partners within these wide-ranging movements which are fast becoming the strongest articulators of people's aspirations.

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**"Fundamentalism
does not equal
Islamism
or political Islam"**

4. The fourth point is that we are facing a serious crisis of secularism, particularly (but not only) in the Arab region. We are talking about a part of the world that has experimented with several and diverse political doctrines: socialism, communism, capitalism, liberalism. There are those still committed to one or another of these ideologies, all being manifestations of some form of secular political discourse. Most of them have not done well (in terms of garnering popular support) for a number of reasons. It needs to be acknowledged that within the current context religion seems to play an increasingly central role. It is clear that secularism does not satisfy those seeking to assert their identity and mobilize masses for transformation.

Many faith-based organisations provide the world's oldest social and development networks. The oldest schools, the oldest clinics and hospitals have been provided with and through faith-based organisations. The moderate wings of Islamist movements have been doing this for a long time. In the context of the Arab world, they have succeeded in providing a working alternative social infrastructure for the economically poor. When evaluating the practical relevance of this ideology, you find yourself observing an ideology in action, and thus it has already proven itself as an effective provider in the social and economic provision of basic services.

We need to be able to address this crisis of secularism since secular values, if understood, may not necessarily be fully appreciated or seem to be a viable option by a large majority of people. We are not talking about the one percent of intellectual elite, we are talking about the masses in the region.

5. Finally, what should Europe do? Hearing the references made in conversations in the opening of this meeting was interesting. To recall some of the points raised: the United States seem to have lost its credibility in the region for numerous obvious reasons; European military presence with UNIFIL in the region is the first time in a long time. An implication that this is a historic opportunity for Europe to become more actively engaged in the Arab

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world. But is it really the case? Will having a military presence be a symbol of change? And in what way does that happen? How would it manifest? UNIFIL is mainly a buffer. It is hardly a political mediator and negotiator *per se*. So why would military presence automatically translate into political transformation or opportunity?

And if that is the assumption, which it clearly is, it needs to be hashed out. How? In which way? Why? The US has indeed lost credibility. But does that automatically translate into a new role for Europe? Has the US genuinely lost ground in the Palestine-Israeli question? Are the Israeli interlocutors now genuinely willing to start listening to the European Union more than to the US? Why would that be the case? If this is the position believed in, it would need to be seriously hashed out. The Palestine-Israeli issue is at the core of the region's problems. Islamist currents, whether moderate or extremist, all maintain strongly that the Palestine-question is at the heart of political perceptions, mass mobilisation and political decision-making in the region.

The first groups of Arab soldiers fighting in the 1948 war with the Palestinians, for instance, were from the Muslim Brotherhood. There is a strong commitment of Hezbollah and Hamas to Palestinian self-determination. There is a strong connectivity between the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the development of political Islam in the region. This cannot be denied. If we believe that this is the case, knowing the US has a strong interest in protecting Israel, and taking into consideration what is unfolding in Iraq and in Lebanon, that 'loss of credibility' is not going to take the US out of this particular game anytime soon. They remain a critical actor and an important player. Rather than thinking of how the EU could play an alternative role to the US, it would be better to find a way leveraging yourselves to work with the US much more critically. Thinking along the lines of influencing and enhancing partnerships with the United States, rather than replacing existing mediators in the regional dynamics, would be more pragmatic and constructive.

The UN is an interlocutor in the region and probably will always be. Do we dismiss that, do we just focus on the role of the EU? That would be unwise. It is better to consider to which extent that partnership between the EU and the UN can be energized, activated, reinforced and further developed where it exists. In the context of the UNDP, we are a tried and tested infrastructure with a key capacity to continue to act as a delivery mechanism. It is inconceivable to me, not to see the tremendous potential of eighteen country offices within the Arab world alone. I am not looking at the Muslim-dominated world, which is a much bigger frame of reference, but we are talking about delivery mechanisms, about the history of a relatively credible engagement and about active and unique bridge-building between governments and civil society that the UNDP embodies.

We need to keep in mind that the UNDP has a whole range of regional programmes that it has been carrying out in the Arab world for many years on issues of governance (everything from working with the judiciary, to training parliamentarians, to empowering citizenship issues and changes in citizenship laws in the Arab region); we are talking about programmes on information communication technology (ICT — everything from building youth centres to training and equipping youth and making technology available to them, to e-government in systems and mechanisms throughout the Arab world). We are also talking about an HIV-AIDS programme which has for the first time historically brought together very varied constituencies, such as religious leaders from around the Arab world, Muslims and Christians, to speak for those who are infected and affected by the disease, to speak against discrimination and to actively commit themselves to continuing to do so. It is remarkable when you bear in mind that since the days of independence movements, Arab religious leaders have not come together to collectively commit to something and to manifest such solidarity.

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Coming from a background of having worked with religious leaders the world over, Latin Americans, Asians, Africans and Europeans, it was remarkable to see that the Arab religious leaders actually made a commitment that was by far much more progressive than their counterparts in the rest of the world. And this is only part of one of UNDP's regional programmes. But it is also important to recognise other regional programmes that UNDP engages in, e.g. those of knowledge (everything from assessing the quality of students and teachers and curricula from primary and secondary school levels to gauging and measuring how successful that kind of education and knowledge production is).

The UNDP is a tremendous resource and network in terms of actively engaging with in the region. It is critical to work with and acknowledge that those existing mechanisms have proven their worth and are considered 'legitimate' actors, despite the fact that they occasionally come under attack. They are critical mechanisms of engagement.

Jan Schoonenboom

Member of the Dutch Scientific
Council for Government Policy

The title of the Scientific Council for Government Policy's report *Dynamism in Islamic Activism* is right in the heart of this morning's subject, and so is its subtitle *Reference Points for Democratisation and Human Rights*. It is the main question we raised in our research: are there reference points for democratisation and human rights within Islamic activism? The motivation for writing this report was exactly the same as the motivation for this morning's session. We have great worries about the developments in international relations, and in internal relations between groups of society with regard to 'Islam and the West'.

Let us go back to the father of the 'clash of civilizations' theory: Samuel Huntington. In 1993 he published his famous article in *Foreign Affair* still with a question mark: 'Is there going to be a clash of civilizations?' His hypothesis provoked a tremendous amount of academic reactions. Most of the comments were rather negative. But despite all the criticism, he repeated his thesis in 1996 in his book. Meanwhile the question mark disappeared. It was almost an exclamation mark with which he ended his title. The original hypothesis became a prophecy: there was going to be a clash between the West and the world of Islam. And today indeed many confrontations have taken place, confrontations that might be and are interpreted in terms of this thesis: the 'clash of civilizations'.

Although the general thesis was exposed as academically unsound, today politicians and even the man in the street are thinking along these lines. It is a frame of reference for judging the relationship between Islam and the West. Not only in the West but also in the Muslim world many people really believe that Islam and West are bound to be on a collision course. Huntington's thesis is also very popular with Osama Bin Laden himself. This

frame of thinking is especially dangerous to Europe, since it is especially vulnerable to such clashes. Europe is bordering on many Muslim states that are or might become sources of conflict, resentment and frustration. Many of these countries have an autocratic regime. They have a very young and rapidly increasing population and have economies which are still unable to deliver the necessary education, health services, housing and employment. That is almost asking for radicalization and, as Mrs Karam already said, it is also a national problem of our countries. Today many Muslims live in Europe, so what is happening outside Europe's borders has an immediate effect on internal relations.

To give an example: when looking at the Dutch opinion polls of recent years, a dangerous development can be observed: a majority claims to be afraid of Islam. Citizens of the Netherlands are distrustful of Muslims, and even a substantial minority proudly calls itself racist. This trend probably may not be confined to the Netherlands. It might take place in Great Britain, in France, in Germany etc. The danger of the 'clash-thesis' becoming reality imposes an enormous responsibility on the EU and it should take up every opportunity for moderating radicalization within its Member States and in its neighbouring countries.

Against this very worrying background, our research focused on the question: is radicalization, terrorism, etc really the only story to be told about Islamic activism? What are the real developments in Muslim countries? Is there a more positive side? The subject was not religion itself but the so-called 'Islamic activism'. This encompasses all kinds of activities by individuals and groups using Islam as a source of inspiration for shaping today's politics and society: from wearing a headscarf to committing terrorist acts.

The analysis concentrated on the core elements of the 'clash thesis', namely democracy and human rights. Huntington saw democracy and human rights as the markers of the difference between the West and the Islamic world. According to him, the West possesses these values, and they are exclusive to the West.

They are the products of a unique Western history, and the Muslim world will never be able to get them. Muslims have their own history, which is not the history leading to human rights and democracy. Muslim majority states, for example Turkey, may borrow these values for a while and experiment with them, but ultimately they remain alien to Turkey's Muslim culture.

We made an in-depth study of three aspects of Islamic activism: Islamic political thinking, Islamic political movements and Islamic law, the notorious 'Sharia'. Why is a study of their relationship with democracy and human rights so important? Not only to falsify Huntington's thesis, but also because there is the assumption that in the long run 'inclusive democratization' of Muslim countries may contribute to de-radicalization. In many Muslim countries, Islamic political movements are repressed by the incumbent regimes and until today Europe has often supported these regimes. These movements are debarred in many countries from the political system.

Here lies one of the reasons for radicalization of Islamic activism: if the Islamic movements, under certain conditions, were allowed to participate in politics, they could evolve from absolutistic, religiously-oriented groups to parties that take on more pragmatic positions. Their participation in politics would force them to formulate political programmes and to become more specific about the solution that Islam might offer. They would have to cooperate and form coalitions with other parties. That is the well-known dirty work of politics. In consequence the more moderate middle-ground would become electorally important. In order to obtain legitimacy among the citizens, they have to formulate views and make proposals on issues that have little to do with religion: building bridges, stimulating the economy and so on. Allowing these groups to participate in the political systems is crucial to de-radicalization.

What are our findings? Are there really reference points for democracy and human rights? The outcomes are rather remarkable. Tradition has an almost dogmatic position in the

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A real European vision is needed, directed at positive engagement with the constructive elements of Islamic activism

Islamic orthodox thinking. It can be visualized — a bit disrespect-fully — in the shape of an onion. An onion has many layers, and in order to reach the core many of these layers have to be peeled off. That is exactly what has taken place in the last century in the Muslim world. In the core of the onion is the most divine element, the Koran. On the outside you have the most human element, the human right to interpret the sacred sources: Koran and Sunna. Therefore scholars aiming at reforms, started on the outside. This began at the end of the nineteenth century, when scholars argued that the right to human interpretation of the sacred sources, which had been abolished in the Muslim world at the end of the tenth century, should be regained.

This almost revolutionary proposal met with fierce resistance. Today it is still controversial. From that moment on, more and more scholars in the Muslim world were stressing the importance of reinterpretating the Sunna and eventually also the Koran. Building on the work of scholars throughout the twentieth century today, there are many attempts to reinterpret the Sunna and even the Koran itself by contextualizing its statements, using linguistics, anthropology, historical insight etc. In doing so, they are freeing the Koran of its literal interpretation which is so popular with ordinary believers. Thus, these scholars emphasize the *values* of the Koran rather than the text and the behavioral norms. Once you have reached that point, you are also ready to emphasize and appreciate the products of human reason: democracy and human rights. So it happened.

Interestingly enough, many of the scholars that have followed this intellectual route are Iranian. They have personally experienced the 25 years' experiment of theocracy, of the interfusion of power and religion. They know well what this means. Even persons who initially played a role in the Islamic revolution in 1979 now emphasize the need for separating Mosque and State. Theirs is a very interesting and intellectual movement. They do not represent the opinion of the common man in the street, nor of Ayatollahs or Imams. But the very existence of this movement falsifies the

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dominant opinion that there has been and still is no reform within Islam, and that Muslims are still badly in need of a Luther. There have been many Luthers already, and many changes are taking place on the intellectual level.

The second subject: Islamic political movements. Our research shows that in the course of the last decades interesting developments have taken place. In the 70s and 80s many movements had a revolutionary character, whereas nowadays these same movements have taken on evolutionary positions. In the 70s and 80s, many of these movements wanted and aimed at revolutionizing the Umma, the world community of believers. They did not exclude the use of violence and were strongly anti-state. In their eyes, sovereignty belonged only to God and never to something like a state. They had all the characteristics of a movement and they considered the Sharia as the superior system of law. They had rather absolute political claims. Think of the name of Hizbollah: the party of God. When you represent the party of God, your claims have an absolute status.

Nowadays, there are many organizations, movements and political parties in the Muslim world which have a completely different vocabulary. They want to operate within the state. They have programs relevant to government policy. They have renounced the use of violence, where previously they were inclined to fight. They also want to work within the constitutional framework of the state. And they more and more adopted the characteristics of a political party. They are using concepts like democracy, rule of law and human rights. That is an enormous difference compared to three decades ago, when Khomeini said human rights were a devilish concept. Nowadays these movements stress the importance of human rights. They are ready to go into coalition politics, they have left their absolutist religious stances and want to compete with other parties. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt for instance, or Hamas and Hizbollah: all of them have gone through this process. This revolutionary position has not disappeared. It is still around in transnational Jihadist movements. These are still talking about

revolutionizing the Umma, establishing the Caliphate, using violence etc.

The third subject: Islamic law. We have done an in-depth study of the twelve most important Muslim countries raising the question: what kind of Islamization of law, if any, did occur, and what were its effects? The first thing that strikes you is the enormous variety in the meaning of the Sharia itself. It can have a very abstract meaning and also a very concrete one. Where it is used in the sense of concrete rules of behaviour you see enormous differences in the applications of these rules from one country to the other. Sharia plays an important symbolic role. In many Islamic countries, there is a struggle on whether the Sharia should be mentioned in the constitution as one of the sources or the only source for positive, binding law. Iraq is the most recent example. Paradoxically, even in countries that have the Sharia as the only source of legislation, legislation is not necessarily very Islamic. The reach of Islamic law is in almost all the countries limited to fields like family and penal law. You can see that Islamization of legal systems and the national law was most radical in the period from 1970 until the middle of the 80s. From that time on, there was a tendency towards moderation and stabilization, even in countries like Iran or Saudi Arabia, where a careful look shows the same tendencies.

There is the very difficult issue of the relationship between the Islamic and international, universal human rights. In the 80s, the Islamic world developed an Islamic declaration of human rights. Interestingly, from that moment on, the concept of human rights as such was accepted, a principal innovation compared to earlier views. As expected, on a number of crucial issues, Islamic human rights were considered different from universal or international human rights. But since then, a kind of convergence between the two concepts can be observed. Discussions within the organs, the committees of the United Nations have become less and less principle-oriented and more and more pragmatic. So, the conflict is getting less and less.

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What are our overall conclusions? First, an enormous diversity can be observed in Islamic activism. There is not one Sharia, there is not one type of Islamic movement. Second, there is an interesting dynamism towards gradual acceptance of democracy and human rights in Islamic activism. Not everywhere, and certainly not everywhere to the same extent. Nevertheless, this tendency is extremely important, since we know that human rights and democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. In our view, these developments and reference points should be utilised. At the same time, we should realize that such reference points are fragile and very dependent on political circumstances. Current international relations are not very conducive to reform movements.

What can and should the European Union do? The European Union has an enormous stake in trying to escape the 'clash logic'. European support for inclusive democratization offers a chance to do so. This means that we must now be inclined — and this deviates from recent European policies — to include Islamic movements among our Mediterranean partners as candidates for taking part in the political system. Nowadays, these movements often represent the only real opposition to the existing autocratic regimes. Europe's level of ambition should be increased, since the current Euro-Mediterranean policy is almost unknown to the larger public. Ordinary European citizens are not aware of Europe's present ambitions and policy instruments.

A real European vision is needed, directed at positive engagement with the constructive elements of Islamic activism. This includes abandoning monolithic thinking about Islam and Sharia. Islamic movements should not be labelled as fundamentalist too quickly. In many cases, these movements are the progressive powers in their countries; much more progressive than the so-called progressive parties. They are really playing the driving forces behind political changes in these countries, also by offering a wide variety of (social) services. Hence, we have to be much more critical to the incumbent regimes when they repress such movements. This is very important. We have been too silent

about violations of human rights; thus, we can rightly be accused of holding double standards.

We should criticize these regimes, for instance when manipulating elections, as has been done in Egypt time and again. The argument of these regimes has always been that Islamic movements cannot be permitted to enter the political system out of fear of the 'one man – one vote – one time' scenario. But who is actually practising this scenario? In Egypt, President Mubarak has been in power for almost thirty years. We should become much more critical towards the undemocratic character of most of the incumbent regimes and their repression of Islamic opposition forces. We should neither hesitate to criticize our sister parties in Muslim countries, our 'progressive' partners in their support of these governments and their violations of human rights. And we should more readily recognise the democratic potential of Islamic movements. We should also recognize that the Sharia can play a progressive role and in many cases can be a vehicle for modernisation.

In short: this new EU policy should be more proactive than the present policy. Think about Europe's new neighbours after Turkey will have become a member of the European Union. These sources of conflict and radicalisation will then be next door. Most importantly, this upgraded EU policy should be politically endorsed. That is what has been missing so far in the policies developed in Brussels, such as the European Mediterranean Policy and the New Neighbourhood Policy. We can give much credit to 'technocratic' policies. But when the European Commission asked the European governments to react on its proposal to include democratic Islamic movements as possible partners into the Euro-Mediterranean policy, almost no government answered. Many of our political leaders are more than a little reluctant to show much enthusiasm for including these movements into the realization of democracy. If they dared to endorse such a policy, it would be an important message to local citizens that we are seeking alliances with the Muslim world.

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In my presentation, I would like to present a working framework on the relationship between Islam and politics in the Middle East region. It will be assumed that many elements are known and, as we are in good company, it is certain that the distinction between Islam and Islamism has already been made. The confusion between a religion, a system of beliefs, and Islamism, i.e. a political system or the political interpretation of religion, is something that concerns the basics — a hypothesis that is understood by everyone. I would like to start with a statement on the relationship between Islam and politics and then speak on two points. The first will relate to the relationship between Islam and society, between religion and society. I believe that you have to start there, to understand the religious figure's religious or social entrenchment, in order to know the impact religion has on society. Subsequently, I will try to see what political models can spring out of this relationship between Islam and society before ending on a few proposals concerning a possible policy for Europe stemming from Mediterranean geo-proximity and which could lead to that 'alliance of civilisations' which everyone rightly talks about today, and which is in contrast to the 'clash of civilisations'.

The statement is the following: in the Arab world, in the Middle East, opposition to the classic political system, which was nationalist in nature and relatively secularised, I emphasise relatively secularised, today comes from Islam. Islam has set itself up as an ideology of opposition that works on two levels, or that attacks on two levels of reality. The first is the change in the nature of the political system and we will consider this idea which comes from a development that is characteristic of Islam as a civilisation.

One should not be afraid of the term civilisation. I will start with the following idea: civilisations have different rates of growth. Islam has a rate of evolution that is different from that of Christianity. I myself

will start with the hypothesis that Islam is the last civilisation to come from a monotheistic religion in which some people believe that one can draw politics from Scripture. I am borrowing Bossuet's words. Whereas in Europe, and particularly in the Europe shaped by Christianity, whether you are Protestant or Catholic, these ideas are behind us, but these are ideas that can clash and today are clashing. The doctrinarians of Islam, of Islamism, are convinced that from an interpretation by a religious figure it is possible to draw a political model that is truly Islamic and which is rooted in a religious and cultural tradition. It is a legitimate issue on which political strategies are built.

The second extremely interesting point is the following: most Islamist parties today are parties in favour of raising the moral standards of political life. Therefore, when they play a part as opposition parties, they do so in the name of an Islamic moral doctrine, but I would say in fact simply a moral doctrine. And when one is acquainted with the extent of the corruption in contemporary political systems, whether they are Western or are in countries that are said to be developing or 'third world', one understands that for a civilisation in which the religious idea still dominates, the most critical and radical moral doctrine, the highest criteria are those that are held by a sacred revelation of the law, because it gives the moral code a transcendent form. This must therefore be kept in mind.

Turkey went into Islamism through the moralisation of political life and through opposition to systems whether secular or not, in fact in this case they were secular, that were essentially marked by much corruption. But having made these comments, I would like to go into the sphere of the statement. This opposition that we see in Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, is an opposition that results from Islamism. The reasons behind this opposition are internal and external. The external reasons also stem from the positioning of Islam within globalisation. And this positioning, which is not from the Muslim world but perhaps from the Arab Middle East in which Islam dominates as a religion, results from three areas where frictions arise. I would say very briefly that these three areas of confrontation

between Islam and today's other civilisations are the areas of sight, knowledge and belief. You have first of all observed in relation to sight the strategy of visibility, the strategy of symbols, how much all the big issues in which Islamism has intervened and in which people wished to see an opposition to the West stem from the external form.

The veil is the only item of clothing that speaks. It is the one that provokes people who are not accustomed to seeing it; but the Indian sari does not provoke us. The question is why. The cartoons of Mohammed, the act of ion – here we are still in the sphere of sight, signs and symbols – provoke us. Still in the sphere of sight, a book about Mohammed, by Salman Rushdie, will cause an explosion of violence. So, there is something in today's world which means that Islam is provoked by a representation which it considers not to fit in with its vision.

Secondly, we are also in the sphere of knowledge. There is a confrontation in the way in which we lay down rules and laws. We are not accustomed to it perhaps because we consider that globalisation is the superior or rather supreme form of westernisation. But it is the globalised West that makes laws. It imposes them. Of course, it does not say that it is imposing them as the West, it imposes them when it makes them in economic laws, in the laws that today govern the media for example. Islam also asks whether it couldn't also be a source of knowledge. And what is the position, what are the laws, the standards that can result from knowledge that is taught, informed and shaped by Islam?

We are provoked by the opposition to human rights. But are human rights Western standards? I do not think so. I think they are universal standards, or should each civilisation be able to create its own human rights? Human rights of Islam, African human rights, Asian human rights — we are in total confusion. Today we are involved in this question. It must be confronted. There is a problem and it must be debated. There is no use in us hiding our heads in the sand.

So, knowledge, sight and belief. Beliefs are the third area of confrontation. We actually begin with a system or a civilisation

"In the Arab world, the problem is not Islamism, the problem is pluralism"

which was glorious in times past and which gave rise to a past civilisation that is no longer recognised today in the contemporary world in what it has become. When Islam glances at its situation today, from a civilisational point of view, there really are questions to be considered. In the year 800, Baghdad was a city of one million two hundred thousand inhabitants, with avenues, libraries, with a remarkable road system and even traffic jams. In the year 800, Charlemagne was in his forests. We have passed the year 2000. There is an evolution of civilisation which Islam through its most widely read theorists considers not to be an evolution but an involution, a civilisational regression.

This issue of regression is raised by Muslims themselves. It must also be confronted and it must be understood that from within Islam is asking itself what are the factors which could have contributed to this Western advance which can be dated back to the years of the fall of Baghdad in 1258 or, if you wish to, 1492 which is the time of the Reconquista and the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. But let us say that from a certain point one civilisation steals a lead over the other and to which the first one, the Islamic civilisation, handed down everything that the modern West has in terms of knowledge. Look at the Pope's recent speech and his historical references with all that analytical knowledge of philosophy that was handed down to Albert the Great, or to Thomas Aquinas. All modern philosophy comes from this handing down of heritage. The question arises of why at a given moment this civilisation was caught up and left behind. It is a legitimate question. One cannot prevent someone who is rooted in their culture from asking questions and coming up with answers. Besides Islamism is an answer to these questions.

Islamism answers we are behind because we have forgotten our beliefs. A return to the fundamentals, from which comes the term fundamentalism, is a way of saving our civilisation. I have been very frank and directly addressed on the question on a civilisational level. I believe there is a problem, which is not simply a political science problem or a problem of interreligious dialogue. It is the

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problem of the future of a group of societies which recognise each other in a common system of cultures and beliefs which for us today is Islam. Once this is said and one is acquainted with a crisis of civilisation, as there is a crisis of Western civilisation, questions about postmodernity arise. Let us begin with the relationship between Islam and politics, and I will briefly address my second point.

Why is Islam so powerful in its connection to society and politics while we, who live in the West, cannot see why and how religious figures or religion can tell us what we have to do as regards legislation or the government of societies? For what reasons? There are three reasons. They all stem from the weight of tradition. The first reason is that Islam has been and remains a system of regulation, of the creation of standards, in the structuring of social relations. A 'superb' explanation that shows how much Sharia remains present in certain areas. Everything that concerns heritage, marriage and divorce, all of this is regulated by religious law. There is no civil law in Islam as regards matrimonial laws and personal status. This is the point of civilisation. But I would like to make a small digression in this explanation. I am drawn to one point where the different phases and the different dimensions of Islam are presented in the form of an onion. This is dangerous in the sphere of sight, because once you have peeled the onion, there is nothing inside. Therefore, one could institute proceedings along the lines of the cartoons of Mohammed episode. I would instead suggest the form of an artichoke, because when you have peeled it, the heart remains.

To set this out, I would suggest exchanging the onion for an artichoke but the comparison essentially remains correct. The second reason is that the weight of tradition also impacts on cultural values. The values on which a society rests, which for the West are individualism and liberalism, are different in Arab-Muslim societies. These are values that stem from solidarity, unanimism, which is tragic in politics. We will see the genuine problem that arises with regard to pluralism. Why should we always want to speak while saying that we always agree on the same thing? Islam

produces answers in the form of unanimism. But the real issue is accepting that you will have to work with a lack of consensus and that there is the possibility of not achieving consensus, that is the case in politics. So, I will come back to this point about cultural value systems. There is no secularity in Islam. It has not been considered anywhere. Islam is in the process of becoming secular, but you will not find a word in Arabic that expresses secularism because the concept is not a product of this history. Therefore secularism is the separation of spheres. There is no secularisation in Islam. It is not supported by religion. But more and more secularisation and secularity can be observed in the Muslim world. The conclusion is: let us not impose our idea of secularity and of secularisation on societies which invent and discover these notions, but let us start from there. Islam is a system that builds cultural values.

Thirdly, Islam is a system that values political legitimacy. You are legitimate when you are on the path of *umma*, when you say things that are comprehensible to the majority of people who participate in your society. There are legitimacies and you understand this, you see this. In Saudi Arabia, legitimacy is specifically always religious. We agree that the process is political. The dynamics are political. They are cultural and social. Their expression is religious. Why is their expression religious? Because the political expression of policy has not yet arrived, and the weight of religion is the best way to express and get across to the population legitimacy, justice, and the importance of what you are saying. It goes through a religious system, which is a dominant system.

On these points, the weight of tradition is extremely heavy. When reflecting on the relationship between Islam and politics one must ask the question what the influence of Islam on the structuring of social relationships is.

Once you are party to this corpus of relationships between the religious figure and social matters, Islam functions on many levels. There are a number of ways to define, invent and create political

systems. There isn't one political system in Islam. I can see three ways of positioning oneself in Islamic systems in relation to religion.

There is a traditional system. I call it the referential system, in which Islam is the main reference for policy. Sharia is the main source of the law. In the twenty-two constitutions of the Arab countries, you will find only one constitution, the Lebanese Constitution, which does not speak of Sharia as being the source of the law. Not because Lebanon is a secularised, non-religious regime, but also because there are eighteen denominations. So what is the source of the law? Are there eighteen sources? It was therefore decided not to talk about this because if it had to be talked about it wouldn't be clear which one was being talked about. But in the other countries, for instance the position of the Commander of the Believers in Morocco, he has legitimacy on a political level and is the traditional reference point. Moreover, the systems in which Islam appears to be the ultimate reference point for policy are the most stable systems. The King of Jordan who refers to the great tradition of the family of Mohammed, the King of Morocco, Saudi Arabia… But we are talking about formal stability. But today we are obliged to note it and to see that it has operating mechanisms that are in any case symbolically effective. So, these are traditional systems in which Sharia appears as the source of the law and in some way guarantees the preservation of social cohesion.

Secondly, you have differential systems in which the political regime has distanced itself from Islam. Look at Algeria, governed by the FLN or at Ba'athist Syria. These are not religious systems although in today's Ba'athist Syria, if you read the Constitution, you will see that there is nothing on Sharia but there is a little note that says that the President of the Republic must be a Muslim. This is also a way of guaranteeing the system. But this very system is in deep crisis. The drama of the Arab-Muslim world today is the crisis of these nation-alist, socialist, secularised systems which at once have failed to provide aid, assistance and economic development, and secondly which fought religion as a means to an end and which have at once turned the liberals and the Islamists against them. Today we are experiencing this crisis of the system and yet it was the right path. It

lays in this distancing of the religious figure and political regulation by the politicians on the basis of the values of development, of individualisation that is a little more determined than in the compact umma system. That pluralism of ideas is where we were eventually heading. Today all of this is in the process of regressing and we have fallen back into very strong authoritarianism.

The third way to place oneself in relation to Islam is Islamism. Islamism is a political doctrine that makes religion a policy and, in wanting to know what an Islamist regime is, you must not be mistaken. If you were to answer 'it is a regime that is in favour of applying Sharia', meaning the return of Islamic law as social law, you would be right. It is an answer that became a reality from 13 February 1979, when Imam Khomeini took power. Not because Iran is absolutely extraordinary as a model, but for the first time an Islamic revolution was successful. A revolution from the top. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1929. The Islamic revolution in Iran took place in 1979. It was actually from that very moment that Islam as the political ideology of a State was made possible. If you refer to European history, the problem of socialism in a single country opposing Stalin and Trotsky in some ways arises today in the Arab world. Is it a model that will spread, or is it an isolated model? Today Islamism is a possible answer and it says that in Islam we have what we need to build a political system on the basis of our religion.

Unlike one might think these are progressive systems: they take on corruption, they want equality including equality for women, not segregation but equality. Women wear what they want, they do what they want. They work like we do, in all professions. I am not a fan of this system because I think that if there is a European reference to help understand this system, it is what happened in Europe in the 20s and 30s, what was called in Germany in particular the Conservative Revolution. These are revolutionaries, but conservative revolutionaries. You know that there were political parties in Italy in particular which were systems that called themselves revolutionary and yet which gave rise to systems that were extremely authoritarian. These systems want to change society but

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with a greater tradition in mind, which is extremely worrying with regard to liberties.

As a first conclusion, there is no secularity on the horizon. Perhaps there were opportunities for secularism twenty years ago; they do not exist today. There is no secularity or secularisation on the horizon except what I would call secularisation by default, meaning that once the Islamist systems fail, or when religious politics fail, we will come back towards secularisation because everything else that we will have tried will have failed, including nationalist ideology and autocratic traditionalism. Perhaps at that point we will actually move towards it, but there is also a growing media influence, an increasing opening of the Arab world, an exposure of minds and mentalities to other cultural models that perhaps are rejected, but which evolve within people's minds. There is no secularity and no secularisation in the immediate future in the Arab world.

The second conclusion, there is no fatalism in Islamism. Islamism is not the only acceptable and willingly accepted solution in the Arab world. This is not because the West is opposed to Islamism that Islamism will decline. Islamism will be and is being fought by the Muslims themselves. There is an internal debate in society. And here I am getting back to the debate on human rights which was initiated by those who spoke before me. Those who are in the prisons of Ben Ali or Ahmadinejad are people who protest in the name of human rights in the same way the Chinese on Tiananmen Square protested in the name of human rights. Nobody considered telling the Chinese that they were protesting in the name of Western human rights. These are human rights, the rights of all humans, these are their rights to speak out, to express their position, their point of view, to come and to go. They are fighting for them and for all of us because they fight for the universality of the human being. Human rights are not the property of the West, even if at a given time they were brought about by Western tradition. But Muslim tradition is in the process of seizing them. There are many thinkers in Islam, exegetes who are considering a new interpretation. And then, if there is no secularity on the horizon, if there is no fatalism

in Islam, there is a future for democracy and there is a future for Muslim democracy, meaning perhaps starting with Christian democracy revised along the lines of values that are thought up within pluralism. Pluralism is the most important point in the debate.

In the Arab world, the problem is not Islamism, the problem is pluralism. Islamism must not be tackled head-on. Spaces have to be created, areas of plurality and if there is something to stand up for in Europe with regard to Arab-Muslim societies, it is these areas of freedom. There will be democracy in the Arab world and in the Muslim world. It is starting to appear and one can identify specific paths. These will not be paths along the lines once again of the French Revolution or revolutions like those of 1848, which mark changes in European history. There are three factors, three paths which are truly specific and which you must assist in the Arab world. There are three bearers and categories of pluralism and democracy.

First of all, there are women. Democracy will come through women. When women in the Muslim world start saying that they have rights and equal potential in work, that they should have equal opportunities, it will make an impact, it will shake a monolithic world. Not because Islam is monolithic but Islam, like all traditional societies including the European societies of fifty years ago, is a system of masculine domination, it is the machismo which must be criticised, not Islam and not Islamism. Therefore, as in all traditional societies, including from within Islam such as in Iran, when women demand a place, something will crack in the monolithic block of hard solidarity.

There are secondly the minorities. Minorities do not have the right to vote, we do not see them, but it is them that will get things moving. What is happening today is tragic. Perhaps the act of giving the Kurds their rights goes too far in calling into question the Iraqi state and its possible break-up. But I am delighted to see that certain minorities are speaking out and say that they have the right to speak their own language, to practice their own religion, to have their own schools while staying where they must stay, while staying in the framework of national or federal unity. This is in contrast to

tradition including that of Arab nationalism and Islamism. This is an evolution for Islam and for the Arab world, and it must be encouraged.

Finally, there are human rights about which we have talked a lot. We must fight for human rights. Human rights are not Western, all the Muslim states that are members of the UN have signed up to the Universal Declaration of 10 December 1948. It is therefore no use placing the debate on an ideological level, or on a religious level. Let us place it on the legal level. Therefore there is a path available and we must not give up, in the name of the principle of culturalism or of cultural specificity, the problem of law. Cultural specificity begins where the law ends, or rather the law ends where cultural specificity begins.

First of all come rights and then specificity. The best outcome is to have the right with which to preserve specificity. So having agreed on all this, this evolution is not unique to the Muslim world. It is an evolution that will go hand in hand with Europe. Europe is the true driver, the partner for democratic evolution. Not the doctrine of American unilateralism.

In Europe, there is an image. Europe for the civilisations of the Middle East presents itself as a Janus, like the Roman god, with two faces. It is on the one hand a purveyor of culture, people continue to come in search of culture here in Europe, including for Muslim societies and if I expand on this, you would say for the West. But Europe was a predator of civilisations. This must be understood when you have a dialogue with the Muslim world. Europe was a conqueror of this nearby world and at the same time, this world that is near to us, the Arab or Muslim world, continues to look towards Europe. We find ourselves in this conflicting position. There should be no surprise that occasionally when the Crusades are discussed, behind the criticism nevertheless we see the need to continue looking towards the West and to search in Europe for the sources of knowledge and the protection of human rights.