

A Vision for the Transformation of the Middle East

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After more than two decades of continued negotiations and mediation, the Middle East peace process has reached a dead-end, causing international enthusiasm and support for it to subside. Meanwhile, Arab normalization of relations with Israel, which began after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, has stopped. American mediation was able to save the process more than once before, but it failed to produce any results. Limiting its role to conflict management, not conflict resolution; the United States was unable to achieve peace or even political stability. People on both sides of the conflict seem to have lost hope of living in peace and consequently are getting used to living in a permanent state of war, violence and despair.

Numerous factors have contributed to the collapse of the peace process. However, no factor is as important as the clashing views and perceptions of Israelis and Palestinians regarding the land of Palestine. Israeli Jews in general view the confiscation of Arab land and the continued expansion of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a security issue; a requirement for Israel's long term survival. Some Israeli Jews believe that they have a Biblical right to the entire land of Palestine; they claim that policies to ethnically cleanse Palestine of its Arab people are justified. On the other hand, Palestinian Arabs view Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories as detrimental to their survival and hopes for having a national homeland and a state. Moreover, Palestinians in general believe that they have a historic right to the entire land of Palestine because they are the people who inhabited that land from the dawn of history until the arrival of Zionist Jews from Europe and elsewhere in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Due to such claims and counterclaims, a compromise solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been hard to conceive, let alone negotiate and implement. Since most issues involved in this conflict are value-related and not interest-related, the conflict is less amenable to compromise.

The Middle East peace process needs a new approach to revive it; a new visionary plan to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable Israeli-Palestinian claims and political views. Such a vision

would place all contentious issues in a totally different perspective that has the potential to transform the perceptions of both Israelis and Palestinians and create new states of mind more amenable to compromise and peaceful coexistence. The process also needs a firm, foresighted American and European leadership and a strong commitment to help transform the political and economic landscape of the entire Middle East region, putting an end to extremism, violence and despair and planting the seeds of moderation, peace and hope.

The history of the Arab-Israeli conflict strongly suggests that the restoration of Arab national rights, which dictates an Israeli withdrawal from all territories Israel occupied in 1967 on the one hand, and an Arab recognition of Israel's political reality and security needs on the other, are the two major conditions for an Arab-Israeli settlement. Without the fulfillment of these two conditions, no peace treaty would be comprehensive or lasting. In addition, without a practical framework for economic cooperation and regional security arrangements, all settlements, regardless of their intentions, would fall short of making peace both a state of mind and a state of political and economic affairs that are mutually reinforcing and self-perpetuating.

The proposed settlement outlined in this paper represents a comprehensive approach to settling all contentious issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It envisions the conclusion of three different sets of arrangements between Israel and its Palestinian and Arab adversaries, with each set having three components: a political component, an economic component, and a security component.

1. An Israeli-Palestinian arrangement to settle the historical and moral claims of both parties to the land, and satisfy the national aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians alike.
2. An Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian arrangement to address issues related to security, national sovereignty, shared resources, and economic cooperation.
3. An Arab-Israeli arrangement to settle other political, security and territorial issues; namely the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese disputes, and to

provide a framework for regional cooperation and the establishment of a Middle East Economic Community.

In addition, the settlement calls for the initiation of a regional security conference to deal with issues related to arms control, border disputes, and the rights of minorities, terrorism, and the management of the region's scarce water resources. Political and security arrangements that are meant to endure must be realistic; they need to be perceived by all concerned parties as fair and mutually beneficial. They must also strive to serve an enlightened common interest. As such, the arrangements must be guided by international law and principles that echo international consensus.

1. The settlement should be comprehensive and capable of guaranteeing the security of Israel and the realization of Palestinian national rights;
2. Palestinians and Israelis should enjoy equal national rights and opportunities;
3. Putting an end to Israeli occupation of Arab land that resulted from the 1967 war;
4. The restoration of Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel during and after the 1967 war;
5. All states in the region are entitled to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders free from intimidation, violence and the threat of war;
6. Israeli acceptance of responsibility for the suffering of the Palestinian people and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem;
7. Using international law, relevant UN resolutions, and human rights principles as a frame of reference to devise a solution to the Palestinian refugees' problem; and
8. A plan to promote regional development and economic cooperation.

The proposal, to be outlined in more detail, provides all parties to the conflict with the means and opportunities to achieve their principal political objectives and security needs. It asks each party to consider only the basic things it needs to feel secure and live in peace, and to overlook the things it wishes to deny its adversaries from getting.

As for the Israelis, the plan provides for:

- A. An Arab recognition of the state of Israel and an acknowledgment of its need to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders;
- B. Security guaranteed by a peace treaty and maintained, if deemed necessary, through the stationing of an international force of observers along shared borders.
- C. The right to define themselves as they wish and to implement their “law of return” in their own state without outside interference; and
- D. Access to living in other parts of Palestine which constitute the state of Palestine.

As for the Palestinians, the plan provides for:

- A. The right to have a state of their own on the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders;
- B. The right to define themselves as they wish and to implement the Palestinian “right of return” in their own state without outside interference;
- C. A comprehensive solution to the Palestinian refugee problem; and
- D. Access to living in other parts of Palestine which constitute the state of Israel.

As for Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, the plan provides for:

- A. The restoration of national sovereignty over the Israeli occupied Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese territories:
- B. The right to define themselves as they wish;
- C. An opportunity for the Israeli people and the peoples of the neighboring Arab states to live in peace and develop as equal partners in one economic community.

Israeli-Palestinian Arrangement

According to this set of arrangements, pre-1948 Palestine would be designated as one unified geographical entity or a "shared homeland" for all Israelis and Palestinians to live in and enjoy. The shared Israeli-Palestinian homeland would host two separate states living side by side and two peoples living together in one land. Israelis' expression of political choice, however, would take place within the borders of their own state only, while the expression of economic choice and residential preference would be extended to include the territories of the Palestinian state. Likewise, Palestinians' expression of political choice would take place within the borders of their State, while the expression of economic choice and residential preference would be extended to include the territories of the Israeli State.

In other words, Israelis would acquire the right to live and work in the Palestinian State while having no rights to participate in Palestinian national politics; Palestinians would acquire a similar right to live and work in Israel but without having the right to participate in Israeli national politics. Israelis as well as Palestinians would continue to be citizens of their own nation states regardless of their place of residence. Israelis who might choose to live in the Palestinian State would enjoy equal rights as other citizens of the Palestinian State, with the exception of political rights. Palestinians who might choose to live in the Israeli state would also enjoy equal rights as other Israeli citizens, with the exception of political rights. However, Palestinians and Israelis would be subject to the laws of the state in which they live.

While neither Palestinians nor Israelis would accept the settlement of large numbers of the other people in their own state, it is difficult to convince most Palestinians and Israelis to concede to the other what they consider as their right to live anywhere in pre-1948 Palestine. In addition, it would be unthinkable to expect Palestinian refugees to surrender forever rights to the land Israel occupied and annexed in 1948-49, and forget the homes, towns and farms they were forced to leave behind; homes they lived in and farms they owned for many generations. Partitioning Palestine into two separate states and, at the same time, uniting its territories into one homeland is probably the only feasible solution to address the national rights, homeland aspirations, and historical claims. Furthermore, applying the 'shared homeland' model to solve the Israeli-

Palestinian problem would, in due time, make national borders less relevant and thus remove all impediments to trade and travel and human mobility, making interaction between the land, its history, its cultures, and all peoples living on it a living reality. While the adoption of this concept is vital to the success of the peace plan, the implementation of some provisions could proceed gradually in order to diminish fear and facilitate mutual trust and confidence.

Jerusalem: As a part of this arrangement, the city of Jerusalem would remain unified and would serve as the capital of the two states. The borders of the city would be restored to the pre-1967 lines in order to establish political and legal jurisdictions, and thus the Israeli and Palestinian claims of sovereignty over the city. Sovereignty, however, would be limited in substance because the plan calls for the city to remain unified, and to form its own representative government to manage all nonpolitical affairs. Accordingly, Palestinians residing in Jerusalem would vote in Palestinian national elections, and Israelis residing in Jerusalem would vote in Israeli national elections, while both Palestinians and Israelis living in Jerusalem would vote in the city's municipal elections. As such, the Holy City of Jerusalem would become a symbol of unity of purpose; a true expression of sharing a homeland by two different peoples, thus making peaceful coexistence and human and cultural interaction a living and lively experience.

As for the Palestinian refugees, they would be granted the right to return home if they choose to do so. While all refugees would demand and be granted the right to return to the Palestinian and Israeli states, it is expected that no more than a million would actually exercise this right and return to settle in either state, provided they get fair compensation for lost property, and Arab states do not force them to leave. The Palestinian state, for allowing Israeli settlers to remain in the West Bank, would get a piece of land within the borders of the Israeli state equal in size and quality to the land occupied by West Bank Jewish settlements. The land would be used by Palestinians to settle some of the returning refugees whose numbers would not exceed the numbers of Jewish settlers living in the Palestinian state. However, Palestinians moving to live in Israel would remain Palestinian nationals and thus would not have the right to participate in Israeli politics. Again, all Israelis and Palestinians living on the other side or moving to do so would be subject to the laws of the state in which they live regardless of their nationalities. The resettlement of some 3.5 million Palestinian refugees, approximately half of

them live in neighboring Arab states, would serve the interests of all parties. Having regained national identity and economic and political rights, the majority of the refugees would most likely choose to continue to live in countries where they have lived for the last six decades. Convenience, kinship, and familiarity with one's social and economic environment would become the primary considerations influencing decisions related to residency and future careers. As a part of this arrangement, Arab states where Palestinian refugees live, namely Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, would agree to give such refugees the right to leave or stay in exchange for generous financial compensation provided by the international community.

In this context, sensitive issues such as security and the "right of return" and the dismantling of Jewish settlements will become more pragmatic and less ideological. When Palestinian demands for a state are fulfilled, and the Palestinian refugee problem is resolved, and Israel's political reality is recognized by Arab states, Palestinian claims on Israeli territory will cease to exist. And when Israelis withdraw their military forces from the occupied territories and recognize the Palestinians' rights, including the right to have a state of their own, Israeli claims on portions of the West Bank will cease to exist. Joining both states together in a shared homeland should make the "right of return" to Arabs and Jews alike a feasible goal to be achieved through peaceful means. In certain cases, it may even become a mutually beneficial act dictated by economic and social imperatives.

For example, an Israeli physician from Haifa whose expertise is more needed in Gaza might opt for settling there rather than commuting daily between his or her work and place of residence. Likewise, a Palestinian computer scientist from Jericho whose expertise is better rewarded in Tel Aviv might opt for settling there rather than endure a daily commute. After losing their jobs, resigning or retiring, both scientists are more likely to move back to live within the borders of their own states where most of their family members and friends live. This continuous movement of people and knowledge would create a dynamic situation; forcing perceptions on both sides to be transformed and new realities to be created that reinforce the advantages of peaceful coexistence and socioeconomic and cultural interaction. Moreover, the presence of a fairly large number of Palestinians living in the Israeli state, and the presence of a similar large number of Israelis living in the Palestinian state would facilitate social interaction between the

two peoples, dictate economic and political and security coordination between the two states, and lessen chances of war.

Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian Arrangement

This set of arrangements will address security and economic and political issues related to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Palestinian and Jordanian territories, and the formation of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. To facilitate this matter, this arrangement will contain three subsets of arrangements:

1. A Palestinian-Jordanian arrangement;
2. A Jordanian-Israeli arrangement; and
3. A Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian arrangement (JIP).

According to the first subset, the states of Palestine and Jordan would form a confederation having one army, one currency and joint councils to coordinate political and economic and monetary policies and legislative matters. In addition, due to the special relationship and family ties that bind Palestinians and Jordanians together, the territories of the two states would be combined to form one Jordanian-Palestinian homeland. However, the expression of individual political choice for Palestinians and Jordanians alike would take place within the borders of their respective states only. This means that Palestinians and Jordanians would continue to be citizens of their own states regardless of their place of residence, and would therefore refrain from participating in the political affairs of the others' state. In addition, the arrangement would designate the existing Jordanian army as the army of the confederation, and thus spare the Palestinians the need to have an army of their own; the army, however, would give Palestinians equal opportunity to join its ranks. The formation of a police force and a national guard should satisfy the security needs of a Palestinian state at peace with all its neighbors. As such, this arrangement would render the Palestinian state demilitarized. As for the second subset, it calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Jordanian territories and the restoration of

Jordanian sovereignty over those territories, which the May 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty has largely accomplished.

According to the third subset, the Jordanian army would continue to be stationed east of the Jordan River and would not cross to the other side without the approval of the designated JIP body. Though Israeli military forces would be required to withdraw from the entire territories of the West Bank and Gaza, this arrangement would, in effect, retain current Israeli security lines without change. The West Bank, as a result, would become a buffer zone separating the military forces of Israel and the Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. To foster Israel's sense of security, the Israeli-Egyptian border arrangements could be duplicated if necessary, and international observers would be stationed along the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Jordanian borders.

In addition, two other arrangements would be established by the JIP states to address regional security and economic issues. The first would be a security regime to regulate the movement of armies, coordinate efforts to combat terrorism on all sides, and address the need to reduce military spending by all parties. Reducing military spending would foster peace and security and save valuable resources needed to revitalize the states' economies and create conditions conducive to economic cooperation and development. It might be worth noting that in the post-World War II era the two nations with the most impressive economic performance were Germany and Japan; both nations have avoided the arms race, limiting their defense spending to 3 percent and 1 percent of their GNPs respectively. The second arrangement calls for the establishment of a Benelux-type economic union among the three states to address trade, labor, water, capital, investment, and other issues of economic integration

The Palestinian concept of state and confederation as outlined in this proposal would alleviate Israeli security concerns further. As a nation-state, Palestine would have to abide by international law and international treaties. And for their state to be accepted as legitimate, Palestinians would have to respect the existing political order and duly recognized international borders. A national feeling of insecurity usually emanates from a common perception that neighbors are not to be trusted because they have territorial claims and/or hegemonic ambitions and the military might to back them up. But when mutual recognition of national borders is

achieved and legitimized, and mutual reduction in military spending becomes a reality, security concerns will be diminished. “That is the point,” wrote Flora Lewis in the *New York Times*, on March 6, 1990. “Israel’s security is at stake as long as Israel has no peace.”

Arab-Israeli Arrangement

This arrangement would address political and security issues between Israel and other Arab states, namely Syria and Lebanon; and outlines a framework and defines a suitable mechanism to create a Middle East economic community. To facilitate this endeavor, the arrangement would contain three subsets:

- A. An Israeli-Syrian arrangement;
- B. An Israeli-Lebanese arrangement; and
- C. An overall regional economic, political and security arrangement.

According to the **first** subset, Israeli forces would be withdrawn from the occupied Golan Heights, and Syrian sovereignty over those territories would be restored. However, Syria would agree not to reposition its military forces in areas vacated by Israel; thus leaving current Israeli security lines unchanged. As a consequence, Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967 would become a buffer zone separating the armed forces of Israel and Syria from each other. Borrowing from the Israeli-Egyptian security arrangements, which have proven workable, a multinational force of observers could be stationed along the Israeli-Syrian border to monitor military movements and guarantee implementation of agreed upon arrangements.

The **second** subset calls for Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese territories still occupied by Israel, and for mutual recognition of international borders. This set of arrangements also calls for keeping the multinational force stationed in Southern Lebanon for few more years to monitor the situation and foster both sides' sense of security.

The **third** subset contains two agreements:

1. An economic agreement to create a Middle East Economic Community, MEEC, whose initial members would be the states of Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria; and
2. A peace treaty calling for mutual recognition and normalization of relations among all MEEC member states.

The formation of MEEC would serve as a vehicle to facilitate regional economic cooperation, enlarge the potential export markets of all states, consolidate a rich but fragmented economic base, and lead ultimately to economic integration and the creation of one common market in the Middle East Region. As such, MEEC would in due time remove all restrictions on the movement of people, trade and capital and thus extend the economic choice for all citizens and business concerns of the community to the outer borders of all member states. The solid technological and scientific base of Israel, the rich energy resources of Iraq, the well-trained manpower of Palestine and Jordan, the fertile land and abundant labor of Egypt and Syria, as well as the seasoned entrepreneurs of Lebanon, Palestine and Israel should provide the new economic community with the human, natural resources and the knowledge needed to grow and prosper, fostering peace and security, and meeting peoples' economic expectations.

MEEC should transform the Middle East economic and sociocultural landscape, creating millions of jobs and a common market of approximately 170 million people, while making regional cooperation a vehicle for enhanced security, political stability and economic prosperity. Human and economic and cultural interaction should, furthermore, lead to the evolution of more democratic attitudes and institutions in all member states, and thus free creative minds to work for peace, not for war; for cooperation, not for enmity; for freedom, not for oppression; for inclusion, not exclusion.

Several socioeconomic issues that are considered today formidable obstacles to reaching a political settlement to the conflict would be vastly reduced in size. The scarcity of water in the JIP states, for example, would become a less critical issue because the three major rivers in the Middle East - the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tigris - would become part of the proposed economic community. The *Washington Post*, in a report on water scarcity in the Middle East published March

10, 1990, said, “even if countries adopted long-range national policies, their mutual dependence on shared water sources requires far-reaching political cooperation.” In fact, ignoring this critical issue, which can never be adequately addressed except within a regional framework, would amount to an invitation for continued hostilities and war. The formation of MEEC provides the required framework for coordinating national policies regarding water consumption. Meanwhile, the well-trained human resources of the JIP states and the expansion of trade, transportation and communications would drive the three economies to become more service-oriented and thus, reduce the overall demand for water.

As part of a negotiated settlement, Israel, for security and other political considerations, might ask that some of its forces continue to be stationed in the occupied Arab territories for several years. The proposed settlement rejects such a request because the stationing of Israeli forces in the Arab heartland would provoke Arab resentment and present Arab radicals with an easy target, thus undermining peace and compounding Israel’s sense of insecurity. Being surrounded by Arab masses and/or confronted by Arab armies, Israeli forces stationed in the Arab heartland would lack the muscle to protect Israel’s security in times of war and ensure their own safety in times of peace. As a result, they would damage prospects for speedy confidence building, delay implementation of certain components of the settlement, and make true Arab-Israeli cooperation more difficult to accomplish and less appealing to contemplate.

In addition to the above provisions, and for such arrangements to produce a durable peace and genuine cooperation, the settlement should include the following:

1. The signing of all documents to make peace and create the three main bodies - the Palestinian state, the JIP and MEEC - simultaneously;
2. Total and prompt Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967.
3. Implementation of the plan in its entirety within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 18 months to keep the peace momentum going and meet people’s expectations;
4. Implementation should move hand-in-hand with normalization of relations among all states; a gradual, yet substantial reduction in military budgets; and compensation and resettlement of Palestinian refugees in countries of their own choice, including Israel;

5. The initiation of a regional conference along the lines of the European Conference on Security and cooperation (CSCE) to be called the Middle East Conference on Security and Cooperation (MECSC). This conference would be convened to endorse the arrangements described above, and to coordinate all efforts to deal with the region's lingering and emerging problems such as terrorism. Members of MECSC would include the seven founding members of MEEC, all other Arab states, and Turkey, Cyprus, Iran, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The functions of this conference would focus primarily on efforts to develop and share the region's water resources, settle border disputes among member states through political means, end the arms race and reduce military spending, and address questions related to the rights of minorities and ethnic groups in the region; and

6. The establishment of an international development fund to:

A. Compensate Palestinian refugees for their suffering and lost property and finance their resettlement and rehabilitation;

B. Provide the funds needed to create the main political and economic institutions envisioned in the plan; and

C. Facilitate cooperative efforts and joint ventures in the economic, scientific, educational and cultural fields.

How to Get from Here to There

Each time a feasible peace plan to resolve conflict is presented, the question of 'how to get from here to there' becomes not only legitimate but pressing as well. The raising of this question implies that the 'here' and the 'there' are known and recognized by all parties concerned as the first and final stations on the road to peace. However, if the final outcome of a proposed settlement is not defined in clear terms, the 'there' becomes an unknown and unrecognized station. In such a case, the question of 'how to get from here to there' becomes, in reality, a question of 'how to get from here to nowhere.' As the history of US mediation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has demonstrated, efforts to start a serious peace process without defining its final destination or ultimate outcome are destined to fail and, in the process, to confuse issues, deepen mutual mistrust, increase frustration and despair, and thus complicate matters further. This does

not mean that interim stations on the road to a final settlement could not be identified and adopted successfully. Defining the final outcome, nevertheless, remains the most important step to be undertaken at the outset of any peace process. Each peace plan should therefore strive to define the desired outcome before choosing a mechanism to conduct negotiations intended to reach a settlement. In fact, the scope and nature of the desired outcome tend to determine the type of mechanism to be employed because ends usually justify means.

Yet, to move the proposed plan from its visionary stage to a practical one, the conflicting parties must first accept it and make a binding commitment to negotiate on its premises. Such a commitment could only come after the plan is officially presented to them by a third party that enjoys international respect and commands significant moral and/or political power. The fact that neither Israelis nor Palestinians have ever articulated a peace plan of their own or made a serious offer to the other for a comprehensive political settlement, makes the intervention of a third party a must. Moreover, the two parties have demonstrated time and again their inability to negotiate an end to hostilities and make peace on their own. And with the current weak political leadership on both sides, and due to political fragmentation and ideological infighting within each camp, hopes that Israelis and Palestinians could somehow negotiate a mutually acceptable political settlement by themselves are misguided at best.

A settlement proposed by the United States or the European Union or both and backed by the international community, including the United Nations, is the only feasible way to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such an approach would give leaders of all conflicting parties a good excuse to accept the proposed settlement and a legitimate reason to abide by its provisions, and rightly claim that it represents the will of the international community. Once the proposal is accepted by all adversaries, other governments and international bodies would be invited to help devise appropriate mechanisms to negotiate and conclude proposed arrangements. For example, Egypt and the United States could be asked to lend their expertise to set up the multinational border forces, while the UN assumes the task of drafting a peace treaty to be signed by Israel and its Arab neighbors. Meanwhile, the European Union would be asked to develop a plan for the formation of an effective economic community. If such an approach is followed, negotiations would be

completed within months, international involvement in the post-settlement stage would be guaranteed, and negotiations would be largely limited to detailing phases of implementation.

An approach based on the notion of step-by-step diplomacy cannot work; it has in fact never worked anywhere or at anytime in history. On the other hand, emphasizing what is called "confidence building measures" is a good recipe for failure, not success; trying to implement certain steps before a mutually accepted outcome is articulated would only lead to creating new facts on the ground that complicate rather than facilitate mutual confidence and peacemaking. The building of most Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, for example, had come while confidence building measures were supposedly being implemented by Israel. To facilitate peacemaking, confidence building measures should come as inducements to ease the implementation process, not as steps to prepare for negotiations.

If a comprehensive peace settlement is achieved, Israel would become another Middle Eastern state living in peace with its neighbors, not an alien body rejected by all Arab and Muslim peoples, giving Israel the opportunity to emerge as the most dominant technological and industrial power in the region. In contrast, if peace fails to materialize, a new large-scale war would be inevitable, and neither Israelis nor Arabs would emerge from it winners; only the radicals on both sides would be able to claim vengeance. Today, only the extremist forces are able to consolidate their power and legitimacy at the expense of moderates and peace loving ones. Nuclear and chemical weapons and long-range missiles have rendered a new Middle East war a senseless adventure with catastrophic consequences for all parties concerned.

The experience of Western Europe following the establishment of the European Common Market in 1957 has demonstrated that economic integration is the safest and most effective way to end age-old enmities and prevent the recurrent outbreak of hostilities. It made political coordination a prerequisite for economic cooperation, while making economic integration the first sure step toward regional stability and political cooperation. Due to the many far reaching developments of the post-Cold War era, our world has witnessed the fragmentation of several countries into smaller political entities, and the consolidation of many more into larger economic communities. While political fragmentations has become a tool to free oppressed peoples and

preserve the cultural heritage of some minorities and restore national identities to others, economic consolidation has become an indispensable framework for development, regional cooperation, economic competitiveness, and political stability.

Recent history seems also to suggest that political and security issues tend to influence economic ones in times of uncertainty and regional conflict. Yet in times of peace and regional stability, economic issues gain the upper hand and tend to determine the direction of politics. While the settling of political conflict usually opens all doors for regional cooperation, economic cooperation provides the rationale for political coordination. Working together, economic cooperation and political coordination represent the most effective means to putting an end to regional conflicts, preserve states' national independence, and provide solid foundations for the establishment of durable peace and security and prosperity.

Dr. Rabie is professor of international political economy. He studied in 4 continents and taught or lectured at more than 60 universities worldwide. He has published 40 books and more than 50 academic papers, and wrote over 1000 newspapers article. In addition, he participated in over 70 conferences throughout the world and was a member of the Harvard University, the Brooking Institution and the Search for Common Ground working groups to advance peace and development in the Middle East. He conceived the idea of the US-POL dialogue and coordinated the secret contacts that lead to the opening of the dialogue in late 1988. Dr. Rabie's interests, writings, and activities reflect a deep commitment to peace, freedom and human development as well as to dialogue among different peoples and cultures.

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