



Robert Schuman

The European Strategy for the Middle East

-Ignacio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño



**Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series
Vol. 4 No. 19
December 2004**

This publication is sponsored by the EU Commission.

The Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series

The Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series is produced by the Jean Monnet Chair of the University of Miami, in cooperation with the Miami European Union Center.

These monographic papers address issues relevant to the ongoing European Convention which concluded in the Summer of 2003. The purpose of this Convention was to submit proposals for a new framework and process of restructuring the European Union. While the European Union has been successful in many areas of integration for over fifty years, the European Union must take more modern challenges and concerns into consideration in an effort to continue to meet its objectives at home and abroad. The main issues of this Convention were Europe's role in the international community, the concerns of the European citizens, and the impending enlargement process. In order for efficiency and progress to prevail, the institutions and decision-making processes must be revamped without jeopardizing the founding principles of this organization. As the member states negotiate the details of the draft constitutional treaty, the Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Papers will attempt to provide not only concrete information on current Convention issues but also analyze various aspects of and actors involved in this unprecedented event.

The following is a list of tentative topics for this series:

1. The challenges of the Convention: the ability to govern a supranational Europe or the return to intergovernmental cooperation?
2. How did the member states figure in the framework of the Convention?
3. The necessity to maintain a community method in a wider Europe.
4. Is it possible for the member states to jeopardize the results of the Convention?
5. The member states against Europe: the pressures on and warnings to the Convention by the European capitals.
6. Is it possible that the Convention will be a failure? The effects on European integration.
7. Similarities and differences between the European Convention and the Philadelphia Convention of 1787.
8. The role of a politically and economically integrated Europe in the governance of the world.
9. How important is European integration to the United States today?
10. The failure of a necessary partnership? Do the United States and the European Union necessarily have to understand each other? Under what conditions?
11. Is it possible to conceive a strategic partnership between the United States, the European Union and Russia?
12. Russia: a member of the European Union? Who would be interested in this association?

Miami European Union Center
University of Miami
1000 Memorial Drive
101 Ferré Building
Coral Gables, Fl. 33124-2231
Phone: 305-284-3266; Fax: 305-284-4406
Email: jroy@miami.edu
Web: www.miami.edu/eucenter

Jean Monnet Chair Staff:
Joaquín Roy (Director)
Aimee Kanner (Editor)
Roberto Domínguez (Research Assistant)
Nouray Ibryamova (Research Assistant)
Markus Thiel (Research Assistant)
Wendy Grenade (Associate Editor)
Eloisa Vladescu (Editorial Assistant)

The European Strategy for the Middle East

Ignacio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño*

The Jean Monnet Chair

University of Miami

Miami, Florida

December 2004

* Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the University of Alicante. He has published several books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict –*El proceso de paz de Oriente Medio* (Madrid, 1999), *El miedo a la paz* (Madrid, 2001), edited the volume *Informe del conflicto de Palestina. De los Acuerdos de Oslo a el Road Map* (Madrid, 2003) and co-edited *España y la cuestión palestina* (Madrid, 2003).

THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

The Iraq crisis has not only highlighted the absence of a cohesive European foreign policy, but has also revealed that European countries are unable to agree on what issues should be given priority by EU action. The establishment of a coherent Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is one of the biggest challenges currently faced by the EU.

A common EU strategy for the Middle East is pivotal to the CFSP, given the fact that numerous international conflicts stem from this area: the upsurge of Islamic terrorism, instability in Iraq, or the failure of the peace process. European countries agree with the United States on the need to maintain stability in the region, to foster political and economic change, and to grant oil supply at reasonable prices. However, the EU and the United States are split in their position towards how to reach their goals.

A growing unilateralism has been the trademark of the US administration's foreign policy since President George W. Bush came to power. This policy has had a negative impact on the US transatlantic partnership. Even though the EU and the United States have made a similar analysis of the current situation in the Middle East, they argue over what measures to take in the coming years: While Washington advocates a merciless war on terrorism based on American military supremacy, Brussels calls for the need to consider the social, political and economic side to the problem as well.

As the weaknesses of Bush Administration's unilateralism have come to the foreground, transatlantic relations have slightly improved, the G-8 Summit held at Sea Island in June 8-10th 2004 being an indicator of this rapprochement. The March-11 terrorist attacks in Madrid have proved that al Qaeda does not differentiate between enemies, but is able to operate both in the United States and the EU. Furthermore, the Road Map and the Greater Middle East initiatives reveal that, despite transatlantic differences, there are common strategies to face future challenges.

This paper aims to answer several questions: Will March-11 bring the UE and US closer together? Does the EU have a clear-cut strategy for post-war Iraq? Does the Road Map amount to a new formula of transatlantic cooperation? Can the Greater Middle East initiative be successful provided that a close cooperation between Europeans and Americans takes place? Answering these questions will allow us to argue that a distinct European strategy for the Middle East does exist, although it lacks the means to be implemented on-the-spot.

The Islamic Challenge: From the American S-11 to the European M-11

The Madrid terrorist attack, in which 190 people died, highlighted the fact that the US was not the only target of Islamic terrorism. The chosen date, exactly two years and a half after S-11, was rampantly symbolic. Authorship was claimed by al Qaeda through the Abu Hafs the Egyptian Brigades (*Kata'ib Abu Hafs al-Masri*). According to the report the "Trains of Death", featured in the Arabic journal *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* on March 12, 2004, the operation was carried out in revenge for Spain's involvement in the Iraq war. The text, pervaded with religious references, threatened with further attacks, since the bombs were simply "part of the settling of old scores with Crusading Spain, now an American ally in the battle against Islam." Police investigation then led to the Moroccan Fighting Islamic Group (*Yama`a Islamiyya Muyahida fi-l-Magreb*), one of the Maghrebi jihadist organizations linked with al Qaeda.

March-11 revitalized the EU's previous commitment to fight terrorism. Yet, the EU warned that, in spite of having the same goals as the US, the question of the causes of radical Islamism was of crucial importance for its eradication. A distinct European position was adopted at three meetings: the Brussels Summit on September 21 2001, the Laeken Declaration in December 15 that same year and, finally, the European Security Strategy in December 12, 2003. Ten days after September-11, the European Council held an extraordinary meeting in Brussels claiming that "the fight against terrorism demands a greater cooperation of the Union with the international community to prevent and stabilize regional conflicts". The Brussels Summit also stated that "the integration of all countries worldwide in a system granting security, prosperity and development is of fundamental importance for the establishment of a strong and lasting community to fight terrorism."

Three months later, the Laeken Declaration over the future of Europe, adopted by the European Council at a meeting held in December 14-15 2001, put forward a number of guiding principles for the European fight against Islamic terrorism: "The eleventh of September has brought a rude awakening. [...] The role it [Europe] has to play is that of a power resolutely doing battle against all violence, all terror and all fanaticism, but which also does not turn a blind eye to the world's heartrending injustices. In short, a power wanting to change the course of world affairs in such a way as to benefit not just the rich countries but also the poorest. A power seeking to set globalisation within a moral framework, in other words to anchor it in solidarity and sustainable development."

Finally, the European Security Strategy, adopted in December 12 2003, polished up the two former declarations and underlined the need to develop a European security policy clearly distinct from the American stance. In a newspaper article, Javier Solana, head of the CFSP, stated that such strategy "was born when Europeans acknowledged that we are stronger when we have a common perception of the threats and how to deal with them. This is true not only for Europe but also for the trans-Atlantic community and for the international community as a whole".¹ For Mr. CFSP, the Middle East is pivotal to the European security strategy: "In our

¹ Javier Solana, "Joining Forces Against New Threats", *International Herald Tribune*, December 12, 2003.

immediate neighborhood, Europe shoulders a growing responsibility for security in the Balkans. But the challenge of building regional security extends further - beyond our new borders to the East and to the Arab world [...]. Closer engagement with the Arab world must also be a priority. Without resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in a region”.

According to Solana, it was essential to investigate the sources of international conflicts, instead of simply dealing with their consequences: “Our strategy of preventive engagement goes beyond the immediate threats to take account of the environment in which those threats are generated. [...] Many regions are caught in a cycle of conflict, insecurity, sickness and poverty. In short, a world fairer is a world more secure [...]. Military capabilities are an important element in our strategy, but there are others. Military efficiency has often been followed by civilian chaos. We need police and other civilian capabilities in crisis and post-crisis situations”.

While the EU regarded it essential to strengthen international institutions and to promote multilateralism, the US advocated a stronger unilateralism to fight Islamic terrorism. In September 2002, one year after the S-11 massacre, the Bush administration put forward “The National Security Strategy”, which mentioned the possibility to launch preventive wars against “emerging threats before they are fulfilled.”² The first step in the universal war against terrorism was the so-called “Axis of Evil”, consisting of Iraq, Iran and North Korea, rogue states accused of developing weapons of mass destruction.

Thus, a bipolar discourse was taken up again to distinguish between a free world, ruled by democracy and market economy, and a string of totalitarian countries which posed a threat to world stability due to their alleged involvement with international terrorism. According to “The National Security Strategy” it was the US’s goal to “expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy”. The achievement of this goal would require “a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests. The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better. Our goals on the path to progress are clear: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity.”

The notion of “American internationalism” put forward by the Bush Administration actually concealed the unilateral measures they planned to take in the future outside the framework of the international community and the United Nations, as would later be shown in Iraq. The policy of “with us or against us”, made popular by George W. Bush since 2001, was just the last link in a chain of refusals to cooperate with multilateral channels: the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court, the Biological Weapon Convention, the Convention of Children’s Rights or the Durban Conference against racism.

Furthermore, the American Strategy for National Security and the European Security

² <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

Strategy are not easy to reconcile with each other because they offer different remedies to deal with the same disease. Shlomo Ben-Ami, former Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, has stated: "American unilateralism prevents the US - truly the indispensable nation - from developing the proper tools for a better world order based on international cooperation [...]. One major task still remains, namely clearing the air between Europe and the US, with the rift between them deepening after September 11 due to the Bush administration's brash unilateralism. The essence of the rift is the following: Europe is currently on a journey toward a quasi-federal pan-Europe, and is positing its security and the new world order on international law [...]. It is the US, which, unlike European countries, lacks the history of a classic nation-state, which is stressing, after September 11, America's claim for national sovereignty and freedom to make independent decisions, versus Europe's aspiration for a world order founded on international cooperation and binding rules for all."³

It may be argued that, despite the similarities with September 11, the events of March 11 did not bring the EU and the US closer together. Rather, they sounded the depth of the rift between both sides of the Atlantic when it comes to confront Islamic terrorism. As Professor Carlos Closa Montero points out: "On the whole, the coalition of support for the Bush administration's current foreign policy is weakening because it was not built on solid foundations. The existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq had not been conclusively proved and, as a result, for lack of a specific United Nations resolution justifying the invasion, the intervention ordered by the Bush administration is illegal and illegitimate. Little by little, the governments of the EU are coming to a consensus on this point, which means the emergence of a generally accepted position. This does not mean, however, a weakening of the transatlantic link. Rather, it simply means that the link is unviable if based on unilateral positions supported by ad hoc allies in opposition to other European countries."⁴

The European Strategy for Post-War Iraq

Besides causing transatlantic relations to go through one of its worst phases in history, the Iraq crisis has also highlighted the lack of a shared approach to military action among EU member countries. This rift led Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defence, to divide Europe into two factions: a New Europe —made up of the United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Denmark and the Czech Republic— and an Old Europe —made up of France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Luxemburg, the founders of the European project— likely to be replaced by the former group in the near future.

The New Europe endorsed the policies of the Bush administration and agreed with the

³ Sholomo Ben-Ami, "9/11: One Year Later", *The Jerusalem Post*, September 6, 2002.

⁴ Carlos Closa Montero, "Del 11-S al 11-M: el papel de España en la Unión Europea", *Análisis del Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Estratégicos e Internacionales*, nº 46/2004.

need to overthrow Saddam Hussein in order to preserve world stability. The Old Europe, however, was reluctant to military action and favoured the solution of the problem through diplomatic channels.

It is worth remarking that most European citizens, regardless of faction, radically opposed the war, as the mass demonstrations taking place in the main European capitals showed. Recent European history played a key role in this trend. As Professor Phillip H. Gordon points out: "After 50 years of integration and the overcoming of past enmity, Europeans have also come to place more faith in diplomacy and cooperation than Americans, whose lessons of the Cold War include a greater respect for the need to threaten or use military force."⁵

The position of the New Europe leaders was explained in an unprecedented declaration titled "United We Stand". Published in different media, this declaration advocated the reinforcement of transatlantic relations and the strengthening of the Washington alliance. In order to justify their alignment, European leaders summoned up the American contribution to free the old continent from Nazism and communism. Moreover, the declaration echoed the American belief in the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq: "We know that success in the day-to-day battle against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction demands unwavering determination and firm international cohesion on the part of all countries for whom freedom is precious. The Iraqi regime and its weapons of mass destruction represent a clear threat to world security".

On May 1, 2003, six weeks after attacks were launched, Iraq was conquered by the Anglo-American troops, and President George W. Bush announced the official end of war, which did not mean the end of hostilities. Actually, the evidence used to justify the invasion was questioned and the absence of the "smouldering gun" was highlighted: the weapons of mass destruction were never found, and neither were the mobile laboratories that, according to Colin Powell, allegedly ran along Iraqi highways. The committee in charge of investigating the S-11 attacks was unable to demonstrate the connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda either. It was equally proved that the reports of the British intelligence services on Iraq's capability to perpetrate attacks with chemical weapons in just 45 minutes had been selfishly overstated by the Blair government.

The utopian belief in a domino effect thanks to which a democratic and free Iraq would become a role model for the neighbouring countries and, more specifically, for the ever troublesome Syrian and Iranian regimes, seems to have been reversed. It is instability and disorder that have eventually spread throughout the Middle East. Far from consolidating a progressive and liberal drive, the Anglo-American stance is jeopardizing the most moderate sectors and strengthening the most radical ones. As Fawaz Gerges, Head of the Middle East Studies Programme in Sarah Lawrence College, states: "The wisdom in Washington was that the

⁵ Philip H. Gordon, "The Crisis in the Alliance", *Iraq Memo* no. 11, The Brookings Institution, February 24, 2003.

war would bring democracy into Iraq, democratize and transform the Muslim Middle East and empower those liberal voices who look to the U.S. We were also told that the war would strike at the roots of militancy and terrorism in the Muslim Middle East. But far from empowering the liberal voices the war is already radicalizing Arab politics and providing ammunition to anti-western, anti-liberal, anti-reformist voices. By deepening the sense of the humiliation and defeat felt by Arab youth a constituency that presents more than 55 percent of the Arab population, the war will likely make this constituency a fertile recruiting ground for militant causes like that of al-Qaeda.”⁶

An editorial in the newspaper *al-Quds al-`Arabi* warned about the paradox underlying Bush administration’s policy, one backed by the New Europe. Whereas their goal was supposedly to build a safer world and to consolidate democracy in the Middle East, the results could not have been more worrying. In the words of Arab journalist Abd al-Bari `Atwan, “President Bush promised the world would be safer after the invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein; his allies envisaged that the war against terrorism would be successful and would weaken al Qaeda, turning Afghanistan into a model of prosperity, well-being and democracy. Time has nonetheless proved them wrong. Violence has escalated within and outside Iraq since the invasion, as the attacks against the Istanbul mosques and the train stations in Madrid have shown.”⁷

The rift between the Old and the New Europe is symptomatic of the harmful impact the Iraq crisis has had on the EU. Member countries have been unable to have a common approach to the crisis, thus showing the limitations of the CFSP. To quote Professors Giacomo Luciani y Felix Neugart, "the Iraq crisis has proven once more that there is no common vision, no shared approach to many international problems and threats among EU member countries, which is the indispensable base for any coherent foreign policy. A common EU approach on Iraq may kick-start a more comprehensive approach for the Middle East."⁸

The lack of an EU-wide foreign policy does not mean that the EU is out of the debate over the future of Iraq. In fact, as soon as the war was over, the EU set in motion emergency mechanisms to grant the effective provision of humanitarian aid, and contributed to a fund to kick-start reconstruction. Between May 2003 and May 2004, the EU created a 305 million euro fund to be distributed in the following way: humanitarian aid in 2003 (100 millions), reconstruction aid in the period 2003-4 (200 millions), and the support of the European Community Humanitarian Office (3 million euros). In the Donors Conference held at Madrid in May 23 and 24 2003, the EU contributed with 1 250 million euros to the reconstruction of Iraq.

⁶ http://discuss.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/zforum/03/sp_iraq_gerges040303.htm

⁷ "Tafjirat Madrid al-damawiyya", *Al-Quds al-`Arabi*, March 13, 2004.

⁸ Giacomo Luciani and Felix Neugart, "Toward a European Strategy for Iraq", *Policy Paper*, Bertelsmann Foundation, March 2003.

The passing of resolution 1 511 by the Security Council legitimised the American presence in post-Sadam Iraq, and called for the strengthening of the UN's role. Later, resolution 1 546, approved on June 6, 2004, confirmed the full devolution of powers to the new Iraqi administration. One of the Old Europe's demands was thus met: that the Iraqi people should regain their sovereignty as soon as possible. The passing of these resolutions, which had German and French support, shows that both the US and the EU think they should overcome their former transatlantic differences and become involved in seeking solutions for the Iraq crisis.

As in the Middle East peace process, the roles of the EU and the US should complement each other. It should not be forgotten that generally, "the UE is much more active and influential in times and areas of peace than in periods of conflicts and strife."⁹ The reconstruction and normalization of Iraq are the EU's top priorities in the Middle East. The *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament*, dated June 9, 2004, entitled "The European Union and Iraq. A Framework for Engagement" underlined that "the EU has substantial interests in working with Iraq to re-build its political and legal institutions, reform its economy and revitalise civil society."¹⁰

The EU could contribute to the Iraq's stabilisation in several ways, although its sphere of influence is much smaller than that of the US. Firstly, European action could act as intermediary between the Arab world and Washington, given the fact that both Europeans and Arabs question "the aggressive attitudes of the US, its black-and-white view of the world, its callousness, and the negative effects of globalization."¹¹ Secondly, the UE should struggle for Iraq's regaining full sovereignty as soon as possible, and avoid using the instability argument to legitimize foreign military presence *sine die*. Thirdly, the EU should offer to share its expertise in designing economic models, since the establishment of a free market zone is one of the essential

⁹ Ghassan Salamé, "Torn between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Europe and the Middle East in the post-Cold War Era" in *The Middle East and Europe. The Power Deficit*, B. A. Roberson (ed.), (Londres, Routledge, 1998) 40.

¹⁰ Featuring prominently among the main medium-term objectives are the following: 1) "a political transition to establish a stable, pluralistic democracy, underpinned by a constitution which guarantees respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms"; 2) "promotion of economic growth and diversification, reduce poverty and unemployment and improved living condition standards for the Iraqi population. A functioning, competitive and diversified market economy, the reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure and Iraq's economic integration into its region will help [...] reduce Iraq's susceptibility to external shocks"; 3) "Iraq's contribution to security and stability in the region [...]. An Iraq at peace with its neighbours and its region will also contribute to the realisation of the objectives set out in the European Security Strategy"; and 4) "establishment of a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory legal framework in Iraq". In order to achieve these goals, the EU thinks it is essential to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity and to guarantee internal security.

¹¹ Riad al Khouri, "A New Arab Coalition for a New Order, Dialog, and Peace: Regional Actors", Workshop *A New Arab Coalition for Dialogue and Peace*, Bertelsmann Foundation & Fundación de las Tres Culturas, Sevilla, May 8-10 2003.

requirements for granting security in the Gulf region in the future. This market zone would privilege common over selfish interests, as in post- World War II Europe.

The European Role in the Road Map

One of the priorities of the European strategy for the Middle East is to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, whose growing deterioration jeopardizes regional stability and fuels Islamic groups. Although the United States and the EU advocate a shared approach to the conflict, Washington continues to support Israel unconditionally, whereas the EU will only endorse those agreements which preserve the national rights of Palestinians.

During the Oslo decade, there was a certain Euro-American cooperation regarding this problem. The EU would be responsible for the economic cost of the peace process, while the US would manage political negotiations. Yet this task-sharing had its limitations since “the EU, although an economic power, lacks the ability to project the military power of its member-states, and with the existing structure of the international market it has been unable to translate its economic power into real political influence.”¹²

Besides threatening regional stability, the lack of an Arab-Israeli peace plan questions the EU’s Euro-Mediterranean strategy. The 1995 Barcelona Conference aimed at laying the foundations for cooperation across the Mediterranean, and stirring a debate on political, security, economic, cultural, and human matters. The Barcelona process was soon undermined by the Oslo process since, for Arab states, an agreement based on the “peace for territories” principle was a prerequisite for talks with Israel. The collapse of the Oslo process had a direct impact on the Barcelona process, polluting it and arresting its natural development.

In view of the failure of Camp David negotiations and the beginning of the Aqsa Intifada, the EU tried to take more action in Israeli-Palestinian relations by participating in the Madrid Quartet, which also included the United States, UN and Russia. The creation of this Quartet exposes the limitations of the Oslo formula and the *pax americana*. The Quartet, in the words of Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, would be the United States’ attempt “to change the working methodology and try to share the heavy burden of Middle Eastern mediation with other international actors.”¹³ The EU’s participation in the Quartet should mark an advance in the complementarities of European and American postures and should reaffirm the EU’s role as a “strategic actor” in contrast to the low political profile kept throughout the first stage of the Oslo process. The EU should counterbalance the US position via its long-standing support for “a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State on the basis of

¹² B. A. Roberson (ed.), *The Middle East and Europe. The Power Deficit*, (Londres, Routledge, 1998) 11.

¹³ Miguel Ángel Moratinos, "El Cuarteto de Oriente Próximo: el papel de la Unión Europea y la implicación de la comunidad internacional en el conflicto" in I. Álvarez-Ossorio (ed.), *Informe sobre el conflicto de Palestina. De los Acuerdos de Oslo a la Hoja de Ruta*, (Madrid: Ediciones del Oriente y el Mediterráneo, 2003) 258.

the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties”, as called for by the Declaration of the Seville European Council in June 2002.

The Road map’s main objective was to close the vicious circle of violence that was opened after the collapse of peace conversations in Camp David and the activation of the Aqsa Intifada. To get out from this impasse, the Road map offered security for Israel by putting an end to the Intifada and the suicide operations, on the one hand, and a “political horizon” for the Palestinians with the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state in 2005, on the other. The significant feature about the Road Map was the active implication of the international community as a whole and, specifically, the EU. This question was a prerequisite to bring the parties back to negotiations. If the Road map is implemented, the EU could play a significant part in helping to verify the implementation of the agreement, supervising security, providing possible buffers between Israelis and Palestinians in certain hot spots, facilitating movement through checkpoints, supervising the delivery of humanitarian aid, facilitating reconstruction and development of infrastructure, and providing assistance in capacity-building for democratization.

Despite the Road Map’s being approved, it soon became obvious that a great share of the Road map success depends on the degree of collaboration among the four members of the Quartet and on the future evolution of transatlantic political relations. And in particular, it needs a close collaboration between the United States and the EU. Iraq’s war was originated in the deep differences among the members of the Quartet. However, all the members agree to consider that the Middle East conflict is a source of continuous regional instability, and must be resolved as soon as possible.

Both the Azores Summit on March 16, and the European Council in Brussels on March 20-21, 2003, demanded a more decisive involvement of the international community for the resolution of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. In this fashion, it is important to learn from the errors of the past. It is essential that the eventual Road Map’s implementation brings immediate results on the ground, and pays heed to the needs of both sides in the talks. Hence a halt must be called to suicide attacks against Israeli targets, but things must also be done to alleviate the hardships which the Palestinians are suffering. This means improving their living standards, assuring them freedom of movement, lifting curfews and, above all, providing territorial continuity between Palestinian zones. Also, the peace process must adhere to international resolutions (resolutions 242, 338 and 1 397 of the Security Council) and not establish new terms of reference instead (the Oslo Agreements or the Road Map).

If a new Palestine state is based on the Oslo borders, rather than those in place before the Six Day War, the Palestinians will see it as yet another *fait accompli* designed to perpetuate Israeli power over their lands and block the emergence of a truly sovereign and independent state. An ill-defined, unworkable Palestinian state without territorial continuity would only add to the region’s problems instead of solving them. As in Oslo, the Road Map calendar established by the Quartet redounds to the benefit of Israel which, as the occupying power, has the means to

alter the status quo by more *faits accomplis*, and to block any advance in negotiations alleging reasons either internal (an unsettled political situation, reasons of state, divided opinions on the peace process, violence, terrorism or corruption of the PA...) or external (crisis in Iraq, regional instability, the fight against Islamic terrorism...).

Quartet members and the EU specifically, must strive to ensure that, this time, the measures timetabled for each phase are enacted without delaying tactics from either side, and the errors of the past are not repeated. Israel, as the occupying power, cannot be allowed to take refuge in the “no dates are sacred” argument, or use this as a pretext to continue altering the situation of the occupied territories by further colonisation and cantonization.¹⁴ (The UE must save the Palestinians from falling hostage to an interminable process of negotiations (it is already 13 years since the Madrid Conference) which far from raising their living standards and bringing them nearer independence, condemn them to poverty and insecurity.

It is important for the EU to play a more active role in order to prevent an escalation of the problem on the spot. As Steven Everts has pointed out.

First, on the diplomatic front, the EU should pressure the US to implement the roadmap [...]. Second, European governments, together with the US, should prepare plans for a NATO-led peacekeeping force to police a final settlement [...]: only an external force can compensate for the lack of trust among the parties after years of violence [...]. Third, the EU should learn to leverage its trade and aid policies in support of its political strategy [...]. In addition to providing incentives, the EU should also be ready to use some sticks. For example, it should keep a firm line on the question of exports from Israeli settlements. Such exports should not be labelled 'made in Israel', and should no longer enter the EU on preferential terms. [...]. The EU should make its 250 million annual aid to the PA conditional on tangible progress towards democracy and good governance.¹⁵

Conclusions

The recognition of a European strategy for the Middle East requires the reconstruction of the transatlantic link and cooperation between the EU and the United States. It should not be forgotten that “Despite the cultural differences among the 16 countries involved in the EU-US relationship, both societies share the ‘Euro-American way of life,’ namely, closely intertwined values as well as political and economic principles based on common premises (free markets and

¹⁴ The latest example of such cantonization is the so-called Defensive Wall hurriedly being erected between Israel and the occupied territories without any response from the international community, even though it breaches the lines of Green Line.

¹⁵ Steven Everts, "How Can Help the Middle East Peace Process", *Centre for European Research Bulletin*, no. 28, February- March 2003.

political democracy.”¹⁶ Besides, Europeans and Americans agree on the need to fight Islamic terrorism, ease Middle-Eastern conflicts, find a way out of the Iraqi maze and guarantee the provision of oil at reasonable prices.

A close transatlantic cooperation is essential to confront these challenges, which not only include Islamic terrorism, but also the structural transformation of the Arab world. The approval of the Greater Middle East initiative during the G-8 summit held at Sea Island on June 10, 2004, may have paved the way for a common approach to reform and development in the Arab world. It is important to remark that such initiative draws upon the conclusions reached by the Arab Human Development Report of 2002,¹⁷ which reveals the problems endemic to Arab societies and outlines the goals to be pursued in the future: 1) full respect for human rights and human freedoms as the cornerstones of good governance, leading to human development; 2) the complete empowerment of Arab women; 3) the consolidation of knowledge acquisition and its effective utilisation.

Steven Everts praises the progress that has been made, which could be symptomatic of a change in transatlantic relations:

"Something of a new consensus has emerged—in Europe, America and across the Middle East itself—that ‘Arab state failure’ is not just a political or socio-economic problem, but also the source of many security threats [...]. The US deserves huge credit for having kick-started the debate on the democratic deficit. But it must also realise that it has a massive image problem in the Middle East. Because of the debacle in Iraq and Washington's near-unconditional support for Israel, many in the region distrust America's motives and sincerity [...]. Europe can be of help here. For well-known reasons it evokes more trust than America.” For Everts, “a joint transatlantic strategy for promoting democratic reforms could have three positive effects. First: it could increase the strategy's chances of success by making sure the message comes from a more trusted source. Second, the US could learn from Europe's mistakes. Third, a joint strategy, with each side playing to its strengths, could have real therapeutic effect on the US-European relationship itself. It could be the common project around which to rebuild the transatlantic partnership. Although there are many obstacles, a robust transatlantic strategy for the greater Middle East is both possible and necessary.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Roberto Domínguez Rivera, "The External Action of the European Union towards the United States: How Relevant is the European Union in Constraining or Replacing U.S. Hegemony", The Jean Monnet Chair, University of Miami, September 2002.

¹⁷ *Arab Human Development Programme 2002. Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, United Nations Development Programme / Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Nueva York, 2002, p. VII.

¹⁸ Steven Everts, "A Joint Strategy to Promote Political Reform in the Middle East", *The Jordan Times*, June 10 2004.

Besides seeking greater cooperation with the US, the EU's strategy for the Middle East must also take into account the limitations of the American foreign policy and reach those places the American policy proves unable to reach. It is blatant that the creation of a Palestine State can further the cause of democratisation throughout the Arab world only if the process itself is balanced and global and leads to a fair and lasting peace. As Egyptian thinker Saad Eddin Ibrahim has rightly pointed out: "Equally important to reinforcing democratization would be positive regional developments, especially regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The signing of a historic peace accord between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization is potentially of great importance, not only in bringing peace and stability to the region, but also in promoting the process of democratization and the development of civil society in the Arab World".¹⁹

¹⁹ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World: An Overview" in R. Brynen, B. Korany y P. Nobel (eds.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World. Vol. 1. Theoretical Perspectives*, Londres, Lynne Rienner Pub., 1995, p. 53.