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### SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AREA

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#### Introduction

Developments around the Mediterranean area in the post-Cold War years have underlined the fundamental fact that this geostrategic location continues to be dominated by a mosaic of distinct subregional constellations, each evolving according to their own indigenous pattern of relations.

An analysis of the society of states which are geographically proximate to the Mediterranean basin reveals two prominent international regions : the geographical space bordering the north-west sector of the Mediterranean which is labelled the European Union, and the geographical area covering the south-eastern flank of the basin which is labelled the Middle East.

The three subregions encompassing the Mediterranean are southern Europe, the Maghreb, and the Mashreq. Each of the subregions continue to follow different evolutionary patterns and there is very little to indicate that any of them will integrate with their counterparts across the Mediterranean any time soon. Relations in Southern Europe are largely co-operative dominant, with this group increasing its intergovernmental and transnational ties with the rest of Europe on a continuous basis. In contrast, conflictual relations have consistently hindered closer co-operation between countries in both North Africa and the Levant. Relations also remain primarily limited at an intergovernmental level, with cross-border types of interaction limited to the energy sector.

The geopolitical shifts that have taken place throughout the Mediterranean since the Barcelona conference in November 1995 and the course of events at the Malta EuroMediterranean conference in April 1997 have made it blatantly clear that a strategic reassessment on how to implement the goals outlined in the Barcelona Declaration must take into consideration the particular subregional trends that are currently manifesting themselves if the objectives of the Euro - Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) to be successfully realised.

The fact that the second Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference took place in Malta in April 1997 without achieving any lasting breakthrough in the Middle East peace process (MEPP) demonstrates that while the success of the EMP is dependent upon advancement of the MEPP, the EMP has had very little influence, if any at all, on the MEPP.

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## **Geopolitical Overview**

The thaw in cold war relations in the Levant which systematically spread to other parts of the Middle East after the historic Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement of 1993 has all but collapsed. Aspirations that the Middle East peace process would become more comprehensive with the inclusion of both Syria and Lebanon have now been replaced by efforts to preserve the fragile peace. Neither the Europeans nor the Americans have been able to influence Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's more hard-line approach to the peace process that has resulted in a freezing of peace negotiations since March 1997.

In March 1997, comprehensive co-operative relations in the Middle East seemed to have all but disappeared. At a meeting in Morocco of the Jerusalem Committee which met to discuss developments in the Middle East, foreign ministers of sixteen countries that included six EMP Mediterranean Partner countries, (Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Guinea, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Niger, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal, Iraq, Syria, Mauritania, and the Palestinian Authority), unanimously deplored the decision by Israel to go ahead with the construction of Jewish settlements in Jerusalem. This meeting was followed by an Arab League meeting in Cairo that urged the suspension of normal relations with Israel and a revival of the economic boycott against Israel. Any hope of revitalising the peace process took a back seat in the last quarter of 1997 and the first quarter of 1998 with Middle East leaders more preoccupied with the possibility of another showdown between the United Nations and Iraq than anything else.

In the Maghreb, efforts to promote more co-operative relations have also been at more or less of a standstill in recent years. Internal strife in Algeria and international sanctions against Libya have stifled attempts to reactivate the notion of a more integrated Maghreb as was outlined in the Arab Maghreb Union Treaty of 1989. The European Union's more active policy towards Algeria and the United Nation's review of the sanctions regime against Libya at the start of 1998 have done little to remove these barriers preventing further intra-regional co-operation.

Along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, Southern European countries have also had to contend with an increase in turbulent relations in their vicinity. Animosity between Greece and Turkey reached quasi-hostile intensity in early 1996 when a dispute over the sovereignty of a number of Aegean Islands resulted in an escalation of military movements on both sides. A Turkish invitation to formalise a set of good neighbourly principles in February 1998 was turned down by Greece who declared that the Turkish proposal offered nothing new. Despite diplomatic interventions by the European Union and the United States, Athens and Ankara also remain stalemated as a result of their failure to broker a peaceful resolution to the Cypriot issue. Further West, stability in the Balkans received a boost in December 1997 when U.S. President Clinton announced that U.S. troops would remain stationed in the region until a more secure peace was achieved. In contrast, in the first half of 1998 instability again reared its head in the Balkans with clashes breaking out between Serbs and Kosovars in Kosovo.

Rather than undermine or diminish the significance of the EMP, the quasi-conflictual pattern of relations in several pockets of the Mediterranean underline further the

significance of the Euro-Mediterranean process, the only multilateral process of its kind in the area.

The Euro-Mediterranean process also offers the possibility of extending co-operative patterns of relations at several levels. First, is the solidifying of north-south relations with the EU becoming more deeply involved in Mediterranean issues. Second, is the aspiration that south-south relations will improve as Mediterranean countries become more aware of the opportunities that exist in their neighbouring states. Third, is the fact that the process offers the Mediterranean countries involved with an exclusive opportunity to become more integrated into the international system itself. After years of being marginalised, the Mediterranean now has a chance to again become an active cross-roads of co-operative international relations.

## **Subregional Flashpoints**

### **The Algerian situation**

On June 5<sup>th</sup> 1997 Algeria held Parliamentary elections in another effort to break the political impasse between the military-supported government and the Islamic opposition groups.

Algeria has been without a parliament since the authorities in January 1992 cancelled a general election in which the radical Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) had taken a commanding first round lead. Violence erupted shortly afterwards and about 60,000 people have been killed.

The FIS has now long since been banned and its key leaders remain behind bars. It is the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and other extremist groups who have broken away from the FIS that now lead the campaign against the government, insisting that only violence will enable them to break the regime's grip on power.

Security remained the number one priority since more than 200,000 troops and security forces were deployed nation-wide to monitor election proceedings when nearly 18 million registered voters went to the polls. The exclusion of FIS and other Islamic parties from the election practically guaranteed that violence would continue.

In 1995, sixty per cent of the electorate voted for President Liamine Zeroual, the former army general. Hope that his election would result in more political pluralism and economic reform have however proved short-lived. It will now be the new parliamentarians task to try and broker a co-operative alliance between the military junta and opposition political parties.

In contrast to the active engagement policies of the European Union and the United States in the Balkans and Central Africa in recent months, the West has largely adopted a policy of indifference towards Algeria. France, the former colonial power, has been careful not become embroiled in the civil war out of fear that such action would lead to an escalation of the terrorist bombing campaign that hit Paris in 1995. But some senior politicians, including recently elected Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin,

have called for France to break its silence and unconditional support for the Algerian regime which benefits annually from subsidized loans worth over \$1billion.

The European Union's important regional office in the Algerian capital, Algiers, has all but closed down. For several years this office has been responsible for dealing with such important issues as the strategic oil and gas trade flowing to Southern European states through Mediterranean pipelines from Algeria and major aid and education programmes as part of its North African policy. Security concerns in other Western European countries such as Italy, Spain and Germany, today the home of some ten million Muslims, have to date not resulted in the introduction of a Euro-Algerian or international "contact group" that would seek to achieve a peaceful settlement to the civil war.

Realising that Algerian political instability could destabilise North Africa and trigger the exodus of millions of potential illegal migrants across the Mediterranean, Europe's main response has been the setting up of a French carrier-backed naval force, known by the acronym Euromarfor. Based in Florence since November 1995, four Southern European countries, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, have joined forces with an official mandate to monitor the western Mediterranean.

For its part, Washington has largely been reluctant to upgrade its involvement in the Algerian situation. This week's sponsoring of neutral election monitors is certainly a step in the right direction. But the fact that the United States is both physically and politically much more detached from the Algerian crisis than the Europeans positions it well to adopt a more proactive diplomatic policy.

In reality, Algeria's current predicament is more than just the cause of a political impasse created by the interruption of political liberalization. The country has also had to cope with an economic crisis brought about by reduced oil revenues and large debt payments and a socio-cultural malaise rooted in the nation's demographic, educational, and linguistic realities.

The international community would therefore do well to seize the opportunity offered by parliamentary elections to convey to all the political forces in Algeria the likely costs and benefits of various outcomes from the standpoint of interested external powers. Unless a sustained case is made for compromise, the vicious cycle of bombings and bloodshed will continue.

It was widely hoped that Algeria's first parliamentary elections in five years would help restore stability in the country where a brutal civil war has already claimed as many as 60,000 victims in recent years. The banning of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and other Islamic parties from the election already augured for a resumption of violence once the election was over. Accusations of voting irregularities will further the determination of those political movements that believe the country's first multiparty parliament elections were in no way freely and fairly held.

Instability within Algeria has for example been a leading factor in relegating the Arab Maghreb Union integration experiment that was launched in 1989 to diplomatic limbo. An escalation in the civil war could also see terrorist activity spread to other parts of

North Africa and Southern Europe, destabilising relations in the Western Mediterranean in the process. Such an outcome would also have a seriously adverse impact upon efforts to nurture a more co-operative Euro-Mediterranean region.

The European Union should also be fearful of the possibility that a prolonged Algerian civil war could unleash hordes of "boat people" across the Mediterranean. Countries such as France, Spain and Italy have already had problems in assimilating the Muslim communities that are legal citizens. Absent the establishment of a European immigration policy that is liberal in nature, an exodus of a large number of illegal migrants would therefore further exacerbate this problem.

With the United States showing an increasing interest in focusing upon security issues in the eastern sector of the Mediterranean, it is largely up to the EU and its member states to seek a peaceful settlement to the Algerian crisis. One possibility is for Europe to start attaching some measures of political conditionality on its aid and debt-rescheduling if no progress is registered in the conflict. It is an opportunity that the indigenous actors themselves and the international community should not neglect if further bloodshed is to be avoided. Failure to resolve the crisis in the short-term is certain to have long-term subregional and regional repercussions.

### **A Solution to Cyprus ?**

Time and time again it has often been commented that a solution to the Cypriot stalemate is on the horizon. Twenty-four years after the division of Cyprus took place by force, there is still no breakthrough in the one of the longest lasting peace processes this century. In light of such intransigence, what should one make of the latest diplomatic efforts to broker a solution?

It is certainly interesting to note the somewhat incremental, but nevertheless consistent increase in international attention that the Cypriot question has succeeded in attracting in the last few years. International initiatives aimed at finding a peaceful settlement to the Cypriot dispute under the auspices of the United Nations have been supplemented by a more concerted international effort with the European Union and the United States emerging as the two leading patrons of peace in the Greek-Turkish-Cypriot triangle.

The European Union can be credited for increasing interest in this subregion of the Mediterranean when it issued its Opinion Report on Cyprus at the end of June 1993. In an effort to spur co-operative ties between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, the EU announced that it would review relations periodically and assign responsibility for any failure to reach a solution. The EU also subsequently made it clear that it was prepared to commence accession negotiations with the Greek Cypriot government if unification of the island did not take place, thus eliminating any right of veto that the Turkish leadership may have hoped to make use of.

The European Union's diplomatic overtures towards Cyprus took another turn with the announcement that it was committed to commencing accession negotiations with Nicosia in March 1998. Brussels must surely have been hoping that rather than risk being branded the guilty party in peace talks and consequently isolated completely by

the Union, the Turkish Cypriots led by Rauf Denktash, would be more open to compromise than in the past.

The other international actor that has been gradually increasing its diplomatic involvement in Cyprus is the United States. Visits by Madeleine Albright when she was still US ambassador to the UN and a visit by Carey Cavanaugh of the U.S. State Department who intervened to quell tension between Greece and Turkey after Cyprus announced it would be purchasing anti-aircraft missiles from Russia helped move Cyprus up Washington's foreign policy priority list.

Further proof of the Clinton Administration's serious intentions towards Cyprus was unveiled when it was announced that none other than Richard Holbrooke would become special U.S. envoy to Cyprus. Holbrooke's credentials as the tough and indefatigable diplomat who negotiated the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 that brought an end to the Bosnian civil war and his stint as Assistant Secretary of State during Clinton's first term in office certainly position him well to ensure that the Cypriot peace process is not allowed to collapse prematurely.

Ultimately, it will be up to the main Cypriot protagonists to decide whether a solution to the Mediterranean island's division can be found. The U.N. sponsored meeting between Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides and his Turkish counterpart Rauf Denktash in upstate New York in 1997, the first of its kind between the two leaders in over three years, held out the prospect that perhaps the time is ripe to achieve a lasting comprehensive solution.

During the meeting the UN mediator, Diego Cordovez, presented the two sides with a draft agreement on principles for a federal Cyprus, made up of Greek and Turkish zones of autonomy. If the UN plan had been accepted the Greek and Turkish communities would have been asked to put forward suggestions for a federal constitution, with the UN drawing up proposals for the most sensitive of issues, such as territory and security.

So far the belief that an international concerted effort to overcome the 24 year-old Cypriot stalemate would be successful has proven to be wishful thinking. The opening of European Union accession negotiations has also not helped heal the rift that exists between northern and southern Cyprus. On the contrary, by mid-1998 the EU card has helped to harden political positions across the Green Line that divides the Mediterranean Island.

Given the disappointing turn of events, has the time come to accept the reality that a united Cyprus cannot be achieved? Or can a peaceful settlement to the dispute between the Greek Cypriots and their Turkish counterparts still be found?

During a visit to Cyprus in May 1998 U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke put the blame on the Turkish Cypriots for blocking the resumption of reunification talks on Cyprus. Holbrooke spent three days shuttling north and south of the barbed wire dividing ethnic Greeks and Turks, a legacy of a Turkish invasion in 1974 after a brief Greek-inspired coup.

The U.S envoy also partly blamed the European Union's treatment of Turkey for the impasse. Turkey's decades-old efforts to join the 15-nation EU were frustrated last year when the EU announced that it would not be starting negotiations with Turkey. Ankara has adopted a more indifferent attitude towards the EU ever since and Brussels' damage control exercise in 1998 has done little to improve relations with Turkey.

The fact that no compromise has yet to be found should not come as too much of a surprise. The main problem with Cyprus is that a settlement of any kind is complex to achieve given the large number of interested parties that have a stake in the affair. Any eventual compromise will have to not only satisfy the Greek and Turkish Cypriots but also their patrons, Greece and Turkey. To date, longstanding differences and bitterness that exist on both sides of the Green Line that separates Cyprus and the suspicion and distrust that continues to plague relations remain.

To date neither side has shown a willingness to engage in serious give and take negotiations. This is especially the case in regard to the two positions taken by the Turkish side. Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash has continued to insist that the Cypriot government recognize the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and pull out of membership negotiations with the European Union. Denktash also wants the economic embargo on the north to be lifted.

Acceptance of the Turkish Cypriot insistence that the Greek Cypriots withdraw their application for EU membership would be tantamount to accepting that the Turkish half of Cyprus has the right to veto Nicosia's foreign policy decisions, a position that no one apart from Turkey is prepared to accept.

In fairness, Holbrooke's task in Cyprus has become that much more difficult since the EU's decision not to commence accession negotiations with Turkey. Rather than help in nurturing a co-operative atmosphere, the EU simultaneous decision to start membership negotiations with Cyprus has added insult to injury in Ankara.

Both President Clinton and Holbrooke have indicated that Brussels was wrong in leaving Turkey on the fringes. The U.S envoy to Cyprus actually goes as far as to claim that it is the imbalance caused by the EU's cold shoulder treatment towards Turkey that is to blame for the present impasse.

Although Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides is recognised abroad as the official head of the whole island, he is not in a position to negotiate on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots. Nevertheless Clerides has never accepted that the relevant article of the 1960 Constitution which defines him as representative of the Cyprus Republic has ceased to be valid.

The Turkish Cypriot enclave, set up in 1983, is recognised only by Turkey. It has refused to take part in the current Cypriot EU entry talks until its sovereignty is accepted. More than 30,000 Turkish troops remain in northern Cyprus. Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash sees the EU prospect as a Greek attempt to extend its hold over Cyprus given that Athens is a member of the EU.

International mediators are anxious to head off a crisis on the island stemming from the Greek Cypriot purchase of Russian anti-aircraft missiles due to be delivered later this year, and threats from Turkey it would use force to block their deployment. The missiles are due to be delivered to Cyprus in September but observers believe that they could be deployed sooner if there is no breakthrough in negotiations.

Greece, which has a defense pact with the Greek Cypriots, has warned it would regard a strike on the missiles as cause for war with old foe Turkey, ostensibly a NATO partner.

Fresh from his successful bid to end strife in Northern Ireland, President Clinton must be hoping that Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton accord on Bosnia, will be able to make some headway in the Cyprus problem. Like other international envoys before him, he has however shown little hope of reuniting Greek and Turkish Cyprus anytime soon.

Curiously enough, tension in the eastern Mediterranean has shown very little sign of abating since the end of the Cold War. U.S. trouble-shooting in the Middle East peace process and Washington's more recent attempt to apply the concept of shuttle diplomacy in Cyprus have so far yielded few tangible positive results. The European Union's activities in the Middle East and its contradictory decisions regarding enlargement negotiations with Cyprus and Turkey have only added to the confusion dominating relations in the area.

### **The Middle East**

The twin suicide bombings that took place at a Jerusalem market in the summer of 1997 cast a long dark shadow over the Middle East peace process. They also revealed that those who are serious about brokering a lasting peace in the region are going to have to find a way of contending with those forces that are adamant about prolonging the conflict. Five years after the signing of the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, what are the prospects for peace in the Middle East?

The massacre that occurred at the Mahane Yehuda market in July 1997 has made it clear that the peace processes number one enemy is the powerful political movement of Hamas who have actively sought to destabilise and sabotage Arab-Israeli relations. Founded in 1987, Hamas seeks the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state ruled by Islamic theocratic law. Although often depicted as a terrorist group, Hamas is tied to and supported by a network of religious, political, educational, and charitable organisations that share its political and ideological objectives. The fact that Hamas is such a diverse movement helps to explain the political difficulties its opponents have to confront when considering taking action against them.

The overall strategy of opponents of the peace process is to ensure that the Israeli government remains sensitive, if not also hostage, to demands of the right wing political groups within the Knesset. The suicide bombings, the first of their kind since Benjamin Netanyahu took over as Prime Minister of Israel have made it extremely difficult for Israel to re-launch suspended peace talks with the Palestinians. As a result little significant progress was registered on the issues of the opening of the Gaza air



and sea ports, the safe passage for Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. It is also clear that security concerns throughout the region will have to be bolstered significantly before any of the actors involved decide to make concessions on the issue of Jerusalem, Palestinian statehood, and the Golan Heights.

The main issue that needs to be urgently addressed is that of strengthening security. Proponents of peace, such as the late Yitzak Rabin, have fallen victim to the opponents of the peace who will do whatever it takes to derail the peace process. Fundamentalist movements have not only succeeded in blocking peace negotiations but have also successfully reactivated hostilities between Israel and its arch enemies in the vicinity such as Hamas and Hizbollah that were more or less dormant until recently. Hamas activists have now launched a full-scale terror campaign that now includes threats to continue carrying out suicide bombings inside Israel and to assassinate harbingers of peace such as U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross. On their part, Hizbollah units have fired as many as forty rounds of mortars and Katyusha rockets into northern Israel. Unless a serious clampdown takes place on such militant factions there is no chance that peace talks will be allowed to proceed as originally planned.

Palestinian negotiators are now faced with dilemma of not wanting to lessen their demands so that they do not lose the support of their constituents, while simultaneously having to accommodate regional and international pressure to take a firmer stance vis-à-vis militants operating within their territory. Failure to resolve this delicate balance of options could result in Israeli troops re-entering the autonomous Palestinian areas as part of a larger strategy to eliminate fundamentalists. It could also fuel anti-Palestinian sentiment in the United States and Europe, primary donors to the reconstruction of the Palestinian entity.

Events in the Middle East recently have also made it clear that peace in the Middle East will be an evolutionary process in which breakthroughs and setbacks take place concurrently. Even the good offices of the United States and the European Union as mediators are not enough to reach a permanent solution to the complex issues affecting the Middle East given the current political environment.

Already a contentious affair, it is now clear that the peace process will become even more complex once Israel and its neighbours decide to deal with the difficult issues that have been deferred until now: namely the fate of Jerusalem and a truly independent Palestinian state. Such issues should therefore only be dealt with once proper security measures have been taken to contain maverick political forces operating in the region.

On the other hand, failure to address these issues in the near future will see the peace process move from a stalling phase to one where it runs the risk of totally being wrecked. The geopolitical security environment in the Middle East for the first five years of the next century will be largely determined by what success or failure is registered in peace talks over the next twelve to twenty four months. Alternative scenarios are a Middle East where co-operative inter-governmental relations are complemented by strong transnational ties or an unstable Middle East dominated by hostile governmental relations and cross border acts of aggression. Events in the recent

past have on average shifted the region closer to the latter end of the spectrum of possibilities.

The Middle East peace process is also crying out for a guarantor now that the Israelis and the Palestinians are no longer capable of negotiating on a bilateral basis. Only one actor has the clout to be taken seriously as a mediator in the region, the United States. Given the historical and psychological barriers that must be overcome before a lasting peace can be secured, the United States must adopt a policy that consists of more measures than simply gradually nudging and cajoling the long-time foes into compromising positions. Washington should consider becoming a party to the Middle East peace talks as is the case in the Korean peace negotiations.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's initial decision to refrain from travelling to the Middle East as frequently as her predecessor Warren Christopher did must also be regarded as an error. The impression instilled among many in the region that Washington is simply not prepared to dedicate the high priority necessary to salvage the peace process. Terrorist groups in the area quickly took note and started to prepare plans that would destabilise cordial relations among Israelis and the Palestinians. Albright's diplomatic overtures towards the Middle East in the first half of 1998 indicates that the State Department is aware that its low-key approach to the Middle East had failed. On the other hand, terrorists may now decide to strike more forcefully in an effort to deter any renewed American enthusiasm towards the region.

The time has also come for the European Union to re-assess its position in the Middle East. If it is serious about playing an active complementary role to that of the United States in the Levant the EU should limit its activity to the economic dimension of diplomacy - by continuing to finance the reconstruction of the least developed areas and encouraging external public and private investment. The political dimension should be left to the Americans to avoid ambiguity and only considered as an option when the EU has its own common and foreign security policy. At the moment the protagonists of the region do not regard the EU as a credible interlocutor and as a result EU intervention in the Middle East has yielded very little when it comes to actually improving relations. The EU should also realise that its entire Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Process will be held hostage as long as hostile relations continue to dominate the eastern shores of the basin.

If the United States and Europe are serious about helping transform the Middle East from a subregional zone of indifference to a co-operative cross border region of prosperity then diplomatic resources should be dedicated to tackling the following issues as soon as possible: completion of the Gaza airport and seaport, the opening of the West Bank-Gaza corridor, and negotiating a permanent settlement to the status of Jerusalem.

Maintaining and sustaining the peace process requires tangible results. Confidence building measures remain fragile and security perceptions ambivalent at best. American and European foreign policy initiatives towards the Middle East therefore need to be better co-ordinated to avoid duplication and to ensure that the goals being sought are complementary.

At a regional level, the protagonists of the Middle East need to be made aware that they risk being further marginalised and relegated to a historic footnote in the international global economy of tomorrow if they are not prepared to put their differences aside and become a more integrated political and economic region.

It is also clear that a continuation of instability across the Middle East will have long-term negative repercussions upon peace and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean. If the Mediterranean area is perceived as a geostrategic location of conflictual relations it will be quickly superseded by other regions of the world where stability can be practically taken for granted. The closer economic and political co-operative links that have been nurtured in the Americas through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the significant ties that have been established throughout south-east Asia and the Pacific Rim through the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), are two such cases in point. One therefore hopes that efforts to restore peace in the Middle East, and by extension, throughout the Mediterranean, are dedicated the attention required in the near future.

If tension in the Middle East is to be reduced diplomatic efforts now need to focus on working out an agenda for final status negotiations. Those committed to peace need to be able to identify clear goalposts that will lead to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, including the principle on which the Oslo Accords were built: land for peace. Direct talks should ultimately aim at settling the borders and nature of the Palestinian entity, particularly the question of establishing an independent state and the administration of Jerusalem.

Such action will demonstrate that a new Middle East blueprint is possible to achieve. It will also enable Israel to concentrate on opening peace talks with Syria and Lebanon as part of the larger goal to secure a comprehensive peace. The obstacles that must be overcome in the interim are many and the price that has to be paid will continue to be a high one. Yet failure to do so will relegate the Middle East to a wasteland status in the next century.