ROMOTING MUTUAL COMPREHENSION ETWEEN PEOPLES TO THE NORTH AND OUTH OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

AAD EDDIN IMBRAHIM

Social well-being in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond can only be achieved through respect for human dignity and recognition of individual sovereignty and all human rights. These rights are best practised and protected under a democratic system of government. Otherwise, individuals and societies are bound to feel insecure and hence their respective states will never be peaceful. Kantian logic places democracy at the heart of peaceful conflict resolution. According to this reasoning, neighbouring democracies should be the safest group of nations. Despite this, to the south of the Mediterranean there are ten countries which have, in the last fifty years, somehow been involved in 20% of the world's armed conflicts. The Barcelona Mediterranean Partnership Declaration of 1994 was meant to bridge the gap which exists between the South and North of the Mediterranean. However, tolerance is a necessary condition for co-operation and partnership within the Mediterranean. Since new Europeans of Arab-Muslim origin constitute the largest cultural/ religious minority group of Western Europe, Europeans have to practice "multiculturalism" on both regional and national levels. Migration should also be regulated through multilateral arrangements. Ultimately, however, migration can only really be controlled by eradicating its root causes through sustainable comprehensive development. Both sides of the Mediterranean want prosperity and peace and they equally want to assist one another. To pursue these objectives, they must respect each others' cultural traditions.

1. On the expanding meaning of security

The fact that a military superpower, the Soviet Union (and its satellites), collapsed without a single shot having been fired, must have sent a very clear message about the true meaning of "security." It is not so much the number, size, or lethal quality of

nuclear warheads, missiles, planes, and tanks. These may be an extremely significant part of the physical security of a nation or a group of countries. However, the dramatic and rapid disintegration of entire systems from within has made many observers realise that societies cannot survive, much less thrive, on the basis of physical security alone. At best physical security may be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for social wellbeing. Nor is social wellbeing guaranteed by bread and other material goods, important as these may be.

Social well-being in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, can only be achieved through respect for human dignity and recognition of individual sovereignty and all human rights; as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which we have recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary (10 December, 1998). These rights are best practised and protected under a democratic system of government. Once this is secured, a society would have fulfilled all essential dimensions of "security." Without democracy and respect for human rights, individuals and societies are bound to feel insecure and live in fear. Thus no meaningful sense can be given to the expression: "security for the state and insecurity for society." In other words, if the individuals and groups which compose a given human society are insecure, their respective states will never be secure.

Thus the concept of "security" has become multidimensional, with the human dimension at its centre. The fulfilment of human security means the assertion of individual sovereignty, ensuring basic human rights, the values of civil society, and the rule of law. A pluralist democratic system is the political implementation of societal security. Since Immanuel Kant enunciated his famous proposition that: "no true democracies go to war with one another" in the eighteenth century, there has not been any empirical evidence to the contrary. The Kantian thesis puts "democracy" at the heart of peaceful conflict resolution. As it is the optimal modality for inter-group peaceful management of disputes over contradictory interests, democracy enshrines the rule of law. Being the mode of governance in a country, democracy should make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for that country to act as an aggressor against another country in which the rule of law and democracy are also the mode of governance. Neighbouring democracies, according to this Kantian reasoning, would be the safest community of nations.

2. Regional neighbourhoods

In brief, it has taken mankind in modern states over two centuries to firmly recognise the validity of the Kantian proposition, which ultimately puts: "democracy and the rule of law" at the heart of "security." Needless to say, "secure neighbourhoods" in the world today have also become "prosperous neighbourhoods."

According to recent UNDP reports, the five countries which make up: "the North Mediterranean neighbourhood" (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) have a combined population of about 180 million, with less than 0.7% annual population growth rate and an adjusted real per capita GDP of $16,000. These five countries have not gone to war with one another for more than 50 years. They are all democracies, and are part of a larger regional neighbourhood further north known as the European Union (EU), which is equally democratic, secure, and prosperous.

By contrast, across the Mediterranean to the south, there are ten countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey) that make up roughly a neighbourhood of about 250 million, with an annual population growth at the high rate of 2.0% and an adjusted real per capita GDP of $4000. (see Table 1). Not only is this neighbourhood less prosperous, but it is also less democratic, and most alarmingly less secure. With less than 5% of the world population the ten countries have had a notoriously disproportionate share of 20% of the world's armed conflicts in the last 50 years (see Table 2).

Without being mechanically simplistic, the correlation of regional security, democracy, and prosperity over time (e.g. 50 years) is abundantly clear. Of course, there are long-ranging historical and deep socio-economic processes underlying the formation of both neighbourhoods to the north and south of the Mediterranean. Yet the end result is what we see. The question is: could this gap in democracy, security, and prosperity be bridged?

3.   A quest to bridge Mediterranean shores.

The Barcelona Mediterranean Partnership Declaration in 1994 was meant to bridge this gap. Its third Chapter spells out what amounts to a human dimension of security, as mentioned in Section II, above. Thus, respect and promotion of human rights, the rule of

Table 1

Mediterranean Countries: Basic Economic and Demographi Indicators

Countries of the Mediterranean	Population in millions (1995)	%Population Growth Rate (1980-92)	Life Expectancy at birth	Population Growth Rate (1992-2000)	UNDP adjusts real per capit; GDP %(1995)
Algeria	28.1	2.8	68.1	2.2	5,618
Egypt	62.1	2.4	64.8	1.7	3,829
Jordan	5.4	4.9	68.9	3.4	4,187
Israel	5.1	2.3	77.5	2.2	6,195
Lebanon	3.0	2.0	69.3	n/a	4,977
Libya	5.4	3.7	64.3	n/a	6,026
Mauritania	2.3	2.4	52.5	2.8	1,622
Morocco	26.5	2.5	65.7	1.8	3,477
Syria	14.2	3.3	68.1	3.3	5,374
Tunisia	9.0	2.3	68.7	2.2	5,261
Turkey	60.8	2.3	68.5	1.9	5,516
Total or Average	**219.62**	**2.8**	**67**	**2.38**	**4,600**
France	57.4	0.5	78.7	0.4	16,229
Greece	10.3	0.5	77.9	0.5	16,140
Italy	57.8	0.2	78.0	0	16,227
Portugal	9.8	0.1	74.8	0	16,171
Spain	39.1	0.4	77.7	0	16,187
Total or Average	**174.4**	**0.66**	**77.4**	**0.26**	**16,190**

Sources. Calculated from tables of the:
UNDP's Human Development Report 1998, and 1993
World Bank, World Development Report 1994
World Bank, Social Indicators of Development, 1991-1992

Table 2

The Cost of Armed Conflicts in the Arab Middle-East and North Africa (AMENA) Region: 1948 - 1996

Type of Conflict	Period	No. of Casualties	Estimated Cost in Billions of US$ (1991 value)	Estimated Population Displacement
A) *Inter-State Conflicts:*				
Arab-Israeli conflict	1948-1990	200,000	300.0	3,000,000
Iraq-Iran	1980-1988	600,000	300.0	1,000,000
Gulf War	1990-1991	120,000	650.0	1,000,000
Other Inter-State conflicts	1945-1991	20,000	50.0	1,000,000
Sub-Total		**940,000**	**1,300.0**	**6,000,000**
B) *Intra-State Conflicts:*				
Sudan	1956-1995	800,000	50.0	4,500,000
Iraq	1960-1995	500,000	50.0	2,000,000
Lebanon	1958-1995	180,000	50.0	1,250,000
Yemen	1962-1972	100,000	10.0	500,000
Algeria	1992-1996	60,000	10.0	300,000
Somalia	1989-1995	50,000	3.0	250,000
Syria	1975-1985	30,000	0.5	150,000
Turkey	1980-1996	20,000	2.0	200,000
Morocco (Sahara)	1976-1991	20,000	3.0	100,000
S. Yemen	1986-1987	10,000	0.2	50,000
Other Intra-State conflicts	1945-1991	100,000	10.0	400,000
Sub-Total		**1,870,000**	**188.7**	**9,700,000**
Grand Total (All Armed Conflicts)		**2,810,000**	**1,488.7**	**15,700,000**

Source: Compiled from the files of the Arab Data Unit (ADU), Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies, 1997.

law, civil society, and democracy are not to be pursued just for their own sake as worthwhile ends, but also instrumentally to reduce dangers to the more stable and prosperous neighbourhood to the north. In this respect, the Barcelona Declaration is the epitome of the principle of: "enlightened self-interest." It was the principle which brought the EU, including the north Mediterranean countries, together in the first place.

3.1. Promoting multiculturalism

Tolerance and acceptance of the "other," or more precisely *each* other across the Mediterranean, is a necessary condition for co-operation and partnership. This calls for equal respect for each other's culture –i.e. without an explicit or implicit demand on the other to abdicate his cultural sovereignty or authenticity to be accepted as equal. This is what is now termed "cultural relativity."

But there is more to accepting the other, without demanding or expecting cultural abdication or capitulation. There are some 15 million Arabs and/or Muslims now residing in the Euro-Mediterranean countries –some as naturalised citizens, second generation children of migrants, permanent residents, legal migrants, and illegal migrants. The older among those had come to the North as badly needed guest workers in the two decades following the Second World War. Whatever their mode of arrival, these new Europeans of Arab-Muslim origin represent at present the second largest religious/cultural group in Western Europe.

Any talking or pontificating about understanding, co-operation, dialogues of cultures or civilisations across the Mediterranean will continue to lack credibility, let alone sincerity, as long as these Euro-Arabs feel estranged, segregated, or discriminated against. As the saying goes: "charity begins at home." So even if we consider accepting others as charity, Europeans have to start practising "multiculturalism" at home first.

Of course educated, sophisticated and well-intentioned Europeans, encountered in Euro-Arab dialogues or OSCE meetings are not the problem. It is the average European in the street or in the market place that may wittingly or unwittingly be the victimiser of expatriate Arabs and Muslims. Subtle stereotyping may start in school textbooks or the media. But that in turn makes it easy for ugly and explicit scape-goating by demagogues.

Expatriate Euro-Arabs are a challenge as well as a litmus test for the human dimension of security across the Mediterranean. Institutional adjustments and arrangements in European education and the media are a must, not only to create a more equitable and humane environment for Euro-Arabs, but also to strengthen overall liberal egalitarian values for all. Such adjustments would also preclude the often apt charge of Western double standards in dealing with non-Westerners. Ultimately, Euro-Arabs could be the cultural brokers and roving entrepreneurs of the Mediterranean –as the Greeks and the Phoenicians once were in earlier times.

3.2. *A quest for better comprehension of Islam and Islamism*

An equally important component of multiculturalism is a better understanding of "Islam," setting it at a healthy distance apart from "Islamism." The former is a great monolithic religion, similar in spirit and moral commandments to Judaism and Christianity. Islamism, on the other hand, is a worldly ideology of some Muslims with a moral claim to purity and the political ambition to take over power to reshape society and state in accordance with this "puritan" reading and interpretation of "Islam."

In so doing "Islamists," (invariably also called Activists, militants, fundamentalists), come into conflict with the majority of their fellow Muslims. Thus the ferments and violence perpetrated by radical Islamists is not mainly directed at non-Muslims, but against other Muslims who refuse to go along with them. The Taliban of Afghanistan, Groupe Armee Islamique (GIA) of Algeria, and the Jamaa Islamiya in Egypt have killed a thousand times more Muslims than non-Muslims. The Islamists' hostility toward the "West" is a mirror image of the attitude of some Westerners towards Islam or Muslims –a sort of a la Huntington 'Clash of Civilisations'. Equally, some of the Islamists' wrath towards the West is due to its long humiliation and exploitation of the Muslim world; without realising that Western imperialism did not target Muslims alone, but swept along just as many Hindus, Buddhists, and other Christians as well. The reason why Islamism has flourished in recent decades is the same reason behind the development of other "fundamentalist movements" which have grown during the same period – such as Jewish, Christian and Hindu fundamentalists. Often it is in response to powerlessness, relative

deprivation, alienation, or exclusion in periods of rapid and profound transitions.

Understanding the difference between "Islamism" and "Islam," or "Islamists" and "Muslims," also means understanding the rules and conditions for potential partnership across the Mediterranean. It is the like-minded forces of progress and enlightenment on both shores who hold the promise of nurturing the partnership. These like-minded forces exist as government representatives, businessmen, youth, and civil society organisations (CSO's) across the sea.

3.3. A coalition against racism, Fascism, extremism, and terrorism

Having made the distinction between Islam and Islamism and having made the point that extremism is not the monopoly of any single religion or nation, it behoves the like-minded to stand together to fight off all the forces of "hate," whether in the name of religion, nationalism, or any ideological "ism."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has been for several years, the last of which was as recently as on October 1, 1998, calling for an international effort to combat terrorism; "Egypt was the first country which alerted the world about the international nature of terrorism, and the need for an international response to combat it... Cards should not be mixed by invoking human rights or the right to political asylum... terrorism has nothing to do with Islam, Christianity, or Judaism as religions, nor is it confined to poor countries. Recent events have shown that terrorism can take place in rich countries which have nothing to do with Islam...." (Interview, Egypt's Armed Forces magazine, Oct. 1, 1998, pp. 10-11).

In order for a collective Mediterranean effort to combat terrorism not to turn into a "witch hunt," a sustainable multidisciplinary effort must be initiated to ensure careful conceptualisation, meticulous planning, and cautious but daring implementation. By the same token, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim fascist tendencies in Europe must be forcefully combated through the law, the media, and education. The recent survey in France, which indicated that as many as 25% of adult French public opinion harbours racist attitudes is truly alarming (A CNN report on France 2000, Oct. 5, 1998).

3.4. A quest to regulate migration

The Southern Mediterranean countries were net receivers of European migrants during the 19th and first third of the 20th centuries. The north-south population movement was motivated by the "push-pull" factors underlying all migrations in history. Now the migratory stream may have been reversed across the Mediterranean, but the underlying factors are the same –shrinking opportunities for a decent living in the south and perceived better opportunities in the North. The difference in opportunities, as testified to by Table (1), is real.

Even if another "Iron Curtain" is drawn or another "Berlin Wall" is built, so long as a 4:1 difference in opportunities persists or increases, there will be migration –legal, illegal, and extra-legal. In December 1994, France attempted to seal its borders when faced with North African new comers in the aftermath of the hijacking of an Air France plane in Algiers airport; and the subsequent killing of a score of innocent passengers and other Europeans living in Algeria at the time (Newsweek, January 9, 1995, p. 14). Within 72 hours, France re-opened its borders, albeit with more restrictions on travellers from the countries of the Maghreb.

Thus the optimum way of handling the issue of the human flow across the sea is to regulate, not to prevent, migration, through multilateral arrangements –in much the same manner as when combating terrorism. We have to be cognisant all the time, however, that if both processes and phenomena are to be stemmed or controlled, their respective root causes have to be eradicated or ameliorated.

3.5. A quest for sustainable development assistance

Ultimately, the eradication or amelioration of the root causes of both terrorism and undesirable migration is contingent on sustainable comprehensive development –economic, social, and political. While much of the responsibility for such sustainable development rests on Southern Mediterranean countries themselves, it behoves their richer counterparts in the North to extend far more generous development aid than the modest rate of recent years. The need is for a "Mediterranean Marshal" type plan.

Part of the proposed Mediterranean-Marshal-Plan (MMP) should entail a Mediterranean free trade (MFT) zone. It is often said by students of development issues that in the long run: "trade is better

than aid." This being the case, the Barcelona Declaration took notice of it by emphasising the free trade idea as the first of three measures for: "creating An Area of Shared Prosperity" (pp. 4-5 of the Declaration). But despite these lofty proclamations, President Mubarak of Egypt expressed dismay at the EU's quibbling over the entry into its market of less than $100 million worth of Egyptian agricultural produce; saying: "what surprises us is that the countries most adamant in this regard are more than $1.0 billion annual net exporters to Egypt." (Al-Ahram, Oct. 2, 1998). Again, this kind of EU behaviour immediately invokes Arab accusations of Western double standards.

The fact remains, however, that free trade and direct development aid across the Mediterranean are necessary conditions for sustainable economic growth. To make the process both comprehensive and sustainable, other measures provide the sufficient conditions, to which we turn in section IV.

4. Promotion of cultural understanding

"Democracy" and the "rule of law" make up two pillars of the broader concept of good "governance." The other two pillars are: "transparency" and "accountability." As such, good governance can neither be superimposed nor can it be expected to strike root overnight. Recent cross-cultural experiences have shown that any superimposition of a social practice by external powers, even if well intentioned, usually backfires. Western powers, including many of our Euro-Mediterranean partners, often overlook this simple human principle of collective learning. They invariably even forget their own long arduous march toward good governance –such as several centuries full of inter-state, intra-state conflict and two world wars. Without invoking a litany of sad memories, we must observe that we in the South were often victims of that Western march towards its own progress and prosperity. We were victimised by Western colonialism and racism –even when this was cloaked in self-virtuous slogans like the: "White Man's Burden" or its "Manifest Destiny" to "civilise" the rest of the world.

The point to be made and one lesson to be learned here is that we in the South can "learn" from the experiences of the West. We do not need to take so many centuries. We do not have to shed as much blood, nor victimise numerous others in the process. We can "learn;"

but at our own pace, according to our needs, and in the light of our own accumulated culture. The: "admiration-resentment" syndrome that many Southern partners have vis-à-vis their Northern counterparts is itself a psycho-cultural complex worth pondering upon. I submit that one underlying factor in that syndrome is the 'positive demonstration' effect as opposed to the 'arrogance imposition' effect. It is one thing to "learn" voluntarily by emulating. It is another to be forcefully "pontificated" at, or worse to be dictated to.

Northern understanding of these and other Southern sensitivities and sensibilities is essential for promoting cultural understanding across the Mediterranean or across any other barrier. We do not only have visible problems which we are all aware of, such as limited resources, burgeoning populations, rising expectations and protracted internal and external conflicts. But we also have invisible dilemmas, of which you may only sense some of their outcomes. Among these dilemmas, is the search for a healthy equilibrium between the polarities of the "sacred" and the "secular," "modernity" and "authenticity," individual "human rights" and collective "social rights" and, more recently, between the "global" and the "primordial." The dynamics of these dilemmas are mostly invisible, in so far as their conflicting polarities are not so much or solely between contending societal forces, but more agonisingly within individual souls. What makes these dilemmas even more wrenching is the absence of institutional structures to tease them out or allow their open interplay without "losing face," or worse "losing life."

Here again, the plea is for empathetic understanding, dialogue over the visible problems and respect for our collective privacy in coming to grips with our inner invisible dilemmas; i.e. finding our healthy equilibrium at our own pace according to our needs, within the context of our own culture.

Let me conclude with a few recent lessons from Egypt's own experience –the quest for an honourable peace in the conflict with Israel and the quest for economic reform. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, Egypt has been profoundly committed to restoring the "just rights" of the Palestinian people. In the process of fulfilling those legitimate commitments, Egypt was dragged into four successive wars between 1948 and 1973. But having restored its dignity in the 1973 October war and having made the point that no country in the region is invincible, Egypt began its forceful march towards peace. The Arab-

Israeli conflict is exactly half-century old this year (1998). The first quarter of it (1948-1973) witnessed four conventional regional wars (1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973). But the second quarter (1973-1998) witnessed not a single such conventional regional war. This is due to Egypt's cultural leadership; which was to be followed in time by the Palestinians themselves (the Oslo Agreement) and the Jordanians (1994). Egypt would not have taken that bold step toward peace, without having first restored its honour and collective self-respect in the October war of 1973 –i.e. washing off the humiliation of the 1967 defeat. By the same token, the Palestinians would probably not have signed a peace agreement without having first had their collective "Intifada" (uprising), 1987-1990, which was like the October War for Egypt –a necessary restoration of collective self-respect. In both cases, Egyptians and Palestinians had to do things at their own pace, according to their needs, and within the cultural context of "collective honour." By Western, "rational," calculation, much time and bloodshed was spent unnecessarily to reach such peace agreements. But, culturally speaking, it could not have been done any other way without appearing to "surrender."

The second lesson is that of Egypt's experience with economic reform. In the mid 1970's, Egypt was pontificated at by the IMF and the World Bank to put into effect certain specific measures to get its economy in order. The pressure reached its maximum intensity in late 1976; and the Egyptian government reacted by reducing food subsidies in January 1977. The instant popular response to these measures were the worst riots in modern Egyptian history, which forced the government to call in the army to restore law and order. However, it also felt compelled to retract on those IMF-World Bank "suggested" measures. The 1977 food riots were not just a mass protest against the anticipated financial burdens, but they were also a form of deeply felt resentment against external Western pressure. When the Egyptian government re-introduced similar measures several years later, at its own pace and according to its own assessment of collective needs, and with a collective perception that it is out of Egypt's own "free will," the Egyptian people responded positively. Egypt's economic reform program is on a moderate speed track, but it is considered as a regional success story.

The ultimate lesson from all this should be clear. Peoples on both sides of the Mediterranean may desire the same objectives of peace and prosperity. They may equally want to help one another. But in

pursuing the former and practising the latter, they must better observe and respect each other's cultural requirements. With mutual good intentions and enlightened self-interest this could, must and will be done.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim *is a leading social scientist, activist and public affairs commentator of the Arab World. He is professor of Political Sociology at the American University in Cairo; Secretary General of the Egyptian Independent Commission for Electoral Review (ICER); President of Cairo's Union of Social Professions; President of the Egyptian Sociologists Association; Trustee of the Arab Thought Forum (Amman, Jordan); Member of the Club of Rome (Paris); Chairman of the Board of the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies; Member of the World Bank's Advisory Council for Environmentally Sustainable Development (Washington D.C.); Member of the Board of Minority Rights Group (London); Middle East International Forum (Terra Media); and Transparency International's Council on Governance. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington (1968) and has authored and edited some 35 books and more than 100 scholarly articles. He has appeared on all the world's major TV networks.*