

## **Mare Nostrum? Theoretical Perspectives On A Once and Future Region**

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### **The Sources of the Barcelona Mediterranean Initiative**

The Mediterranean (Mare Nostrum) is rich in historical cycles of regionalism and the effort to elucidate emerging trends is an important and timely one. The letter of invitation to this conference addresses two cleavages afflicting the Mediterranean as a region: one along the rich/poor division, the other along presumed civilizational lines (Islam and the West). Both cleavages have come up in the broader debate over globalization. It is only appropriate to reflect on the ways in which these and parallel cleavages have been expressed in other regions involving mixes of industrialized and industrializing countries. While focusing on the Barcelona process mainly, this chapter’s overview will occasionally bring in other regional experiences as well.

I begin with a characterization of the sources of the Barcelona Mediterranean Initiative or European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). I then explore several competing and complementary perspectives on the possible evolution of the Mediterranean as a region. In particular, I consider the applicability of a more general argument about the role of political coalitions forming in response to internationalization in shaping regional orders. Next I examine the relevance of democratic peace arguments for regional order. Finally I analyze the relationship between multilateral regional institutions and regional cooperation. These three institutions--involving markets, democracy, and regional multilateralism respectively--provide the “triple logic” or foundational rationale for the EMP enterprise. The inherent wisdom, desirability, and motivations behind each of these logics is heavily contested by actors in North

and South, albeit no single coherent alternative has yet matured. Each of the three logics endows both state and non-state actors with important roles as agents of regionalization. I end with some dilemmas and potential hurdles embedded in the foundations of the Barcelona process.

The Barcelona process Initiative must be seen as part of a broader scheme of European Union (EU) evolution in the post Cold War era, one involving spatial and functional expansion, including efforts to design a common foreign policy. Both classical security issues (the availability of non-conventional weapons in the Middle East, terrorism, oil and natural gas dependencies) and “new” security issues (migration, drugs, human rights violations, environmental degradation) bear on EU concerns with the political fate of the Mediterranean basin.<sup>1</sup> These concerns led the Spanish presidency of the EU to organize a conference in Barcelona in November 1995, gathering the Union’s 15 and 12 South Mediterranean (SM henceforth) countries. The outcome was the Barcelona Declaration or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) Initiative designed to promote peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean region. The Barcelona process brings to relief three institutional pillars on which a peaceful Mediterranean region would presumably rest: economic reform, democracy and regional multilateralism. These pillars reflect three interrelated logics rooted in more general conceptual approaches to the understanding of regional conflict and cooperation.

### **The logic of economic reform**

Economic proposals in the Barcelona Declaration included the establishment of a Free Trade Area between the Union and SM countries by 2010 and the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers by SM partners. Economic aid and loans (European Investment Bank) were to benefit the SM’s private sector and to encourage structural reform and privatization. MEDA II (1999) expected the “structural adjustment facility” financed under MEDA I to target more specifically

the reforms necessary for free trade with the EU on the one hand, and to streamline EU decision making on the other.<sup>2</sup> The underlying objective was an effort to help adapt SM countries to an increasingly freer and globalized economy in the belief that such transformation would also help resolve the many socio-political ailments often associated with this region.

Comparisons with other regions often buttress the perceived insolvency of decades-old Middle East/North Africa political-economy models. By the early 1990s the Middle East had become the least self-sufficient area in the world in food, with among the highest rates of infant mortality and illiteracy (particularly female), high levels of unemployment and underemployment rates, enormous income disparities, high inflation, overvalued real exchange rates, and uncompetitive goods.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Egypt's GNP grew from \$260 in 1972 to \$640 in 1992, its budget deficit quintupled from 1975 to 1989, and its external debt increased from \$2 billion in 1972 to \$40 billion in 1990. According to a UN human development index (HDI) ) combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income worldwide, Egypt and Morocco--non-oil economies--ranked 112<sup>th</sup> and 125<sup>th</sup> respectively by the mid-1990s (Tunisia was 83<sup>rd</sup>).<sup>4</sup> For comparative purposes, Pakistan and India ranked 138<sup>th</sup> and 139<sup>th</sup> whereas South Korea ranked 30<sup>th</sup>, Thailand 59<sup>th</sup>, and Malaysia 60<sup>th</sup>. Average adult literacy remains as low as 56% in the Arab world (98 % in East Asia, excluding China) and much worse for women (Egypt's is 36%). Radical Islamist movements have shown little proclivity to support female education, known to be a critical factor in reversing birth rates and improving economic conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Joffé (1998).

<sup>2</sup> The MEDA Regulation was adopted in 1996 and the beneficiaries are Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Up to 1998 the MEDA Programme has committed 2,325 billion euro and disbursed 600 million euro for economic reform, social cohesion and regional cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> On the legacy of statism in the region, see Richards and Waterbury (1990:219-99), Owen (1992:139-65), Bill and Springborg (1990:20), UNDP (1994:209), Heydemann (1993).

<sup>4</sup> UNDP HDR 1994-1998.

Such statistics are frequently cited in efforts to induce further economic reform in the MENA countries. But what is the underlying logic presumably connecting economic reform with regional cooperation? On this, there is far less agreement than meets the eye. The relationship between interdependence and conflict/cooperation is not a simple one.<sup>5</sup> One effort to link the process of economic reform to the nature of regional relations focuses on the nature of political coalitions that emerge as a consequence of internationalization and economic reform.<sup>6</sup> According to this argument, politicians worldwide rely on material and ideal aspects of internationalization to broker political coalitions across constituencies that respond differently to the opportunities and constraints of internationalization. Three ideal-typical coalitions tend to form: internationalizing and backlash (of which pure forms are hard to find in the real world) and hybrid. Driven by their varying socio-political composition and incentives, these coalitions also embrace different approaches (grand strategies) to both the domestic and global political economy and institutions.

Both qualitative and quantitative studies found internationalizing ruling coalitions to be more prone to intensify their country's trade openness (imports plus exports/GDP) and expand exports, to attract foreign investments and curb wasteful military-industrial complexes, to shun weapons of mass destruction, defer to international economic and security regimes, and strive for regional cooperative orders that reinforce those objectives. Instead, backlash ruling coalitions were found to restrict and reduce trade openness, exports, and foreign investment, while building expansive military-industrial complexes and weapons of mass destruction, challenging international security and economic regimes, and exacerbating civic, religious, and ethnic-nationalist differentiation within their region through an emphasis on territoriality, sovereignty, and self-reliance. Coherent coalitional grand strategies are hard to find in the real

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<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Solingen (2002 forthcoming) and the entire volume by Mansfield and Pollins (2002 forthcoming).

world but the links between a commitment to internationalization and regional cooperation and stability are evident (the latter two are extremely important for the kind of macroeconomic and investment policies pursued by internationalizing coalitions).

Different coalitional combinations in different regions create regional orders, “identities,” and shared expectations about conflict and cooperation and, conversely, are affected by them. Inter-regional comparisons suggest that where internationalizing coalitions gathered strength in a given region, there was a better chance that **zones of stable peace** might develop. In these cases ruling coalitions relied more on concerts, collective security, and multilateralism (Kupchan and Kupchan 1991, Ruggie 1993), avoiding aggressive steps towards each other and mutually adjusting to resolve outstanding disputes. For instance, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian States) produced relatively peaceful stability on the ashes of earlier wars and internationalizing coalitions in the Southern Cone of Latin American made MERCOSUR and denuclearization a reality. Even in the Middle East, proto-internationalizers made strides in a cooperative direction in the early 1990s (Oslo and Multilateral Middle East Peace Process) although recalcitrant backlash rivals throughout the region ended this brief cooperative spurt (Peters 1996; Solingen 2000). In most regions, the ascendancy of an internationalizing “zone of peace” places a direct challenge on lingering backlash coalitions in that region, undermining all pillars of their grand strategy, from the merits of economic closure to the advantages of militarization. ASEAN had that effect on Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, and Myanmar. In time, these regional orders can overturn the coalitional balance within residual backlash states, easing their eventual inclusion.

**War Zones** are more likely to emerge in regional contexts where backlash coalitions have a dominant presence. Given the logic of their grand strategy--particularly militarization and nationalist brinkmanship--stronger backlash neighbors tend to produce and reproduce backlash strategies elsewhere. Kim-II Sung’s attack on South Korea (both ruled by backlash coalitions at

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<sup>6</sup> Solingen (1998, 2001). Internationalization involves increased openness to international markets, capital, investments, and technology but also to an array of political and security

the time), Perón's intimidations of neighbors with a fusion bomb, Nasser's encroachment in Yemen and quarantine of Israel in 1967, Sadat's 1973 October War, Begin/Sharon's invasion of Lebanon, Asad's threats to Israel and invasion of Lebanon, Arafat's threats to Jordan and Lebanon, Galtieri's Malvinas debacle, repeated Indo-Pakistani military encounters and nuclear swaggering, Iran's Islamic Republic threats to Saddam Hussein and Saddam's own invasions of Iran and Kuwait, are all instances of this pattern. Finally, **zones of restrained conflict** reflect coalitional competition among internationalizing, backlash, and hybrid leaders at the regional level. Under these conditions, no pure coalitional type dominates across states within a region. In hybrid orders regionally hegemonic coalitions (Nasserism in the 1960s) influence the fate of domestic--and eventually regional--coalitional balances, frequently shifting them towards their own type.

In some ways, the EU has conceived of itself as a zone of stable peace and of the Mediterranean as a hybrid or mixed region at best, with at least some SM ruling coalitions falling under the category of latent backlash. Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey are regarded as closest to the EU's internationalizing expectations. Beyond that, Morocco, Tunisia, and perhaps Jordan are regarded as having made more progress in the process of internationalization than the rest of the region. The first two promoted exports through preferential trade agreements with the EU and have stimulated private sector and foreign investment for over a decade. In both cases, states employed about one-fourth of the nonagricultural workforce, far less than under most regimes elsewhere in the region. Tunisia's President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali deepened liberalization in financial markets and foreign investment, promoted tourism, and reduced maximum tariff rates from 220 percent to 43 percent in the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Jordan implemented liberalizing reforms to improve foreign investment throughout the 1990s and embraced FTAs with the EU and, most recently, the US. Under Sadat's *infitah* ('opening up') initiative in the mid-

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regimes, institutions, and values.

<sup>7</sup> Rodrick (1994:62).

1970s Egypt began its slow process of liberalizing economic sectors, although it has often provided a paradigm for little structural adjustment, regulatory reform, privatization, or trade liberalization.<sup>8</sup>

Unsurprisingly from the perspective of the coalitional argument outlined above, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, and Tunisia were also strong supporters of the Oslo and multilateral peace processes, which were regarded as a *sine qua non* for creating stable regional conditions propitious for economic development. The connections are made clear in the analysis of Riad Al Khouri: "Jordan's economic hopes are riding on the peace process...A resolution of the conflict with Israel would also allow reduction of the country's defense budget (which accounts for more than 30 percent of government spending)... Against the background of the lingering Arab-Israeli conflict, it remains almost impossible to attract [foreign] investors. But if the peace process flourishes... Jordan will assume its rightful economic role. However, the vociferous fundamentalism unleashed by democratization is belligerent and xenophobic--opposed to both peace and foreign investment."<sup>9</sup> The last remark alludes to a problem afflicting many a SM state, with Algeria representing the worst debacle thus far.

However, Islamist movements opposed to internationalization are not the only source of backlash forms in the region.<sup>10</sup> No less resistant to internationalization and to its domestic political and economic implications is Syria's ruling coalition. The vast national security apparatus created by the Assad regime in Syria is a prime example of sectors that will lose their *raison de'être* with regional peace.<sup>11</sup> The entrenched, oversized, Baath-run state has largely resisted economic liberalization despite some incipient steps in the 1980s that

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<sup>8</sup> Cassandra (1995).

<sup>9</sup> Al Khouri (1994:110, 111, and 115). On the affinity between nationalism and Islamist fundamentalism, see Rouleau (1993).

<sup>10</sup> On populism as a common characteristic of both Arab nationalists and Islamist radicals, see Leca (1994:79)

<sup>11</sup> Hinnebusch (1995:74). On support among Syrian private entrepreneurs for a peace settlement with Israel, see Lawson (1994:63). On regional conflict and (domestic) military gains throughout the Arab world, see Waterbury (1994).

essentially “carefully preserved the privileged position of ‘national’ economic sectors.”<sup>12</sup> Public sector managers (as well as military and security) bureaus have countered the nascent power of private commercial and industrial groups. Repression of the Islamist opposition has been harshest in Syria. As expected, the backlash interests driving Syria’s ruling coalition have also kept Syria (and Lebanon, which it controls) self-isolated from most peace initiatives, including the multilateral Middle East process. Beyond these cases lies the “outer ring” of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean arch in the Euro-Med region, including Iraq and Iran, most of which have thus far resisted meaningful economic reform. Unlike Southeast Asia, there is no critical mass of internationalizers within this arch, let alone in its periphery.

On the whole, economic reform has proceeded at a much slower pace in the Middle East than virtually everywhere else (except perhaps Africa) and political resistance to economic openness remains quite strong in many cases.

### **The Logic of Democracy**

The Barcelona process also aimed at encouraging “good governance,” namely democracy and human rights, and advanced the development of confidence-building measures to enhance regional security. In the European experience, stable and mature democracies are considered to be better suited to deal with ethnic and religious fragmentation than non-democracies. Differences can be channeled through established political parties and legal institutions able to adjudicate along more or less neutral (civic) lines.<sup>13</sup> In this view, only democracy can be expected to guarantee human rights and personal freedoms. “Good governance” cannot emanate from regimes that are not accountable. Furthermore, the 1990s diffused the idea (developed by Kant) that democracies tend to safeguard peace in their interactions with each other. Despite contradictory logics of democratization in the Middle East

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<sup>12</sup> Heydemann (1992:94). See also Hinnebusch (1993); Rabinovich (1993), and Lawson (1994).

(see below), the commitment of European publics to these principles makes it hard to envisage a EU Mediterranean policy that does not rely on these norms. Democracy here appears a win-win: it is expected to deliver human rights to the SM and peaceful interactions between the Mediterranean north and south.

Yet, the progression toward democracy in the SM has been rather slow in contrast to democratization in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and East Asia. In the 1990s there was some movement towards selected democratic procedures and political liberalization characterized by incipient, tentative and piecemeal steps, and marked by significant reversals.<sup>14</sup> Morocco, a pioneer in its tolerance for freedom of the press and association with a relatively strong (in regional terms) civil society, has seen some barriers placed on the monarchy. By the late 1990s there was a government led by the traditional opposition (although appointed by the late King Hassan) and further improvements were detected with the inception of King Mohammed to the throne in 1999. Jordan has experienced competitive parliamentary elections since 1989 and a lively press debate over domestic and foreign policy, although liberalization has suffered some setbacks since.

Egypt has restricted political participation through electoral laws and procedures that favor the ruling National Democratic Party.<sup>15</sup> Its record with respect to human rights and pro-democracy organizations has only deteriorated, as evidenced by the conviction of noted scholar and activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim on trumped-up charges of defaming Egypt's reputation and receiving foreign funding without governmental permission. In tune with modal SM politics, Tunisia's President Ben Ali won a third 5-year term with nearly 100 percent of the vote in the October 1999 elections, replicating President's Mubarak 1999 performance in Egypt. Palestinians elected their president and Legislative Council in their first free, internationally

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<sup>13</sup> For aggregate evidence on the relative immunity of democratic states to **violent** ethnic upheaval, see Hill and Rotschild (1993) and Espy et al (1997).

<sup>14</sup> On the relationship between democratization, Islamist movements, and the Middle East peace process in the SM state, see Solingen (1996, 2003).

supervised, elections in January 1996 but no elections have taken place since, and Arafat has precluded genuine political participation. Syria remains a highly personalistic authoritarian state that also places stiff boundaries on Lebanese liberalizing efforts. Turkey, with strong incentives from the European Union, is arguably furthest along in the process of democratization and political liberalization.

To the extent that some democratization-from-above has taken place throughout the region--launched by state elites with varying degrees of support from powerful societal actors--these have been efforts at coopting influential elites while placing strict controls on the expansion of political rights. These barriers to democratization make initiatives in the third area of the Barcelona Process--society and culture--harder to sustain. These initiatives include the development of networks of human rights organizations and economic and defense institutes (EuroMeSCo is a network of strategic studies institutes, and FEMISE is a network of economic Institutes). The promotion of private organizations and NGOs is expected to reinforce democratization, economic reform, and multilateral cooperation.

### **The Logic of Regional Multilateral Institutions**

The merits of regional multilateral institutions in the eyes of EU officials and publics are quite clear: "if it worked in Europe, why not everywhere?" The EU experience has had a profound influence in international relations regarding the role of regional institutions in cooperation. However, it is important to recognize that cooperation can come about even where there is either little integration or institutions, whereas conflict is possible in the presence of both.<sup>16</sup> This is supported by findings from coalitional analysis and regional conflict and cooperation in other regions, beyond the EU (Solingen 1998, 2001). In the Arab Middle East the

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<sup>15</sup> Harik (1994); Korany, Brynen, and Noble (1998).

<sup>16</sup> Cooperation involves the willingness to forsake, in repeated instances, the unilateral pursuit of one's own interests and to undertake commitments on a basis of diffuse reciprocity (Keohane

institutional record of the Arab League and other institutions in promoting cooperation has been rather dismal and despite the rhetoric of integration, economic barriers among Arab states have never receded. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an exception, in some respects.

Incipient cooperation cannot be traced to institutions in the Korean peninsula. Rather, the establishment of institutions such as the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) lagged after the emergence of cooperation in response to domestic political changes. A dense institutional framework in Latin America failed to advance cooperation between Argentina and Brazil, over decades of guarded regional relations, limited economic exchange, and risky nuclear competition. Only a dramatic domestic coalitional reversal in the 1990s instilled new life into old institutions and created novel, effective ones. Internationalizing coalitions, not institutions, steered MERCOSUR and a denuclearized Southern Cone.

In accordance with its strong belief in the role of institutions in inducing cooperation, the EU became active in the Multilateral Middle East Peace Process between 1993-1995, and underwrote much of the emergent Palestinian political-economy. Between 1994 and 1996 the Middle East/North Africa Economic Conferences became an instrumental venue for regional reconciliation through economic development, global openness, and foreign investment. According to the World Economic Forum conference' organizers, there was considerable expectation in the region that investment would grow in tandem with deepening privatization, new stock exchanges and capital markets, protocols on trade and regional agreements in sectors such as transport, energy and tourism, solid GDP growth, and rapid industrialization. The rise of Palestinian Islamist terror and the election of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel stalled the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian track, and thus also helped derail these multilateral efforts.

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1986). Behavior oriented to resolve disputes and to avoid armed confrontations--with or without institutions--is considered cooperative.

Clearly, regional institutions have had a hard time emerging among SM states, either in the inter-Arab or broader (including Arab-Israeli) plane. However, as argued earlier, regional institutions are perhaps neither necessary nor sufficient for cooperation. What about the relationship between economic integration and cooperation? The EMP process can be seen as a “hub and spoke” model that potentially competes with MENA integration processes. But does it really? First of all, MENA’s repeated attempts have never taken off. Second, integration with the rest of the world does not necessarily imply that regional integration is hindered (as evidenced by East Asia and the Mercosur region). Third, integration with extra-regional countries is expected to create domestic changes in the political economy of MENA countries, perhaps ameliorating internal tensions; this could result in improved intra-MENA political and economic relations (per logic of coalitional argument, to be continued here). In sum, the EMP initiatives might be considered complementary to further regional integration, and perhaps a catalytic factor in bringing about the latter.

### **Dilemmas and Hurdles in the logic of Barcelona**

Liberalization Sequences: Democracy, economic reform, and multilateral cooperation do not obtain automatically, linearly, or inevitably, as was expected at the inception of the post Cold-War order. They can only result from concerted activities of political leaders, in government and in opposition, and the societal forces that back them up. Current leaders of SM states confront a dilemma: they either phase in this multifaceted process of change or run the risk of being phased out by it. Which will take place is hard to foresee (particularly after 9/11!). The first option has a second order dilemma folded unto it: current leaders seem deadlocked between “democratic efficiency” arguments (democratization can facilitate economic reform and help build new political coalitions to overcome opponents of economic reform) and “authoritarian

advantage" models, illustrated by China and the East Asian tigers.<sup>17</sup> Predictions about which model might prevail are hindered by what Kuran (1991) labelled "the predictability of unpredictability" or the imperfect observability of real private preferences under authoritarian rule, a phenomenon that foiled predictions of Eastern European democratization/marketization as well.

The Theocracy Trap: Uncertainty about peoples' values/preferences underlies another quandary: the evolution of Islamist tendencies in the SM. Ruling coalitions and secular segments of society throughout the region confront a dilemma fueled by the fear--evident in the Algerian case--that **democratization** may not lead to **democracy** but to Islamic theocracies. This fear may be exaggerated, considering that political inclusion of Islamist groups (where practiced, as in Jordan) appears to have led to diminishing political returns for Islamist movements, in the form of stable--and at times even declining--electoral gains. Iran may also constitute a promising path to more democratic institutions, although the latter are still being forcefully resisted by a powerful backlash clique (a coalition of clerics, military, state enterprises, and selected ministries). The challenge remains: how can the Algerian model be avoided and, instead, strong institutional arrangements be designed to protect the integrity of the democratic system so that even a small plurality of votes cannot undermine democratic continuity.

Regional or Global Multilateralism? SM countries have expressed disappointment with EU economic proposals, which fell short of any significant economic relief of the kind that might result from lowering the barriers to SM agricultural exports (but is hindered by domestic EU politics, with unfortunate consequences). Yet, making the process of economic reform in the SM contingent on EU policies seems wrongheaded. Integration into a global trading and investment regime has inherent advantages, particularly if accompanied with sensible and equitable privatization procedures and social safety nets. FTAs are not always compatible with a full

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<sup>17</sup> Pool (1993); Harik (1994); Norton (1995).

commitment to global multilateralism. In sum, the energies of SM states, NGOs, and economic entrepreneurs should retain a focus on internationalization and global multilateral institutions.

What about the outer ring? Whatever difficulties the EU faces with the pace of transformation of SM partners in the Barcelona process, they seem to pale in comparison with the immediate prospects of the “outer ring” (Iraq, Sudan, Iran, and Libya--not part of the EMP or any prospective multilateral Middle East peace process) for developing the three institutional pillars for a peaceful region. The outer ring adds new complexities and uncertainties to those of “insider” SM states, notably dilemmas regarding weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Progress made through the Barcelona process can help prevent destabilizing effects on insiders stemming from the outer ring *problematique* (for example, the economic hardships that Jordan faces as a consequence of sanctions on Iraq).

Nesting Israel/Palestine into the triple logic: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an important variable--although clearly not the only barrier--to advancing the Barcelona process. Virtually all the dilemmas and hurdles identified above affect the past and future of this conflict. Despite significant initial strides, the 1993 Oslo breakthrough collapsed under the weight of Islamist terror, ensuing hardline coalitions in Israel, shattered multilateral negotiations, and faltering economic and political reform within the Palestinian Authority and among most of its Arab neighbors. The “outer ring” exacerbated this downhill trajectory by funding terrorism and undermining any reform efforts throughout the region that might further weaken the appeal of backlash models. Israel’s military operations in the West Bank and Gaza are likely to complicate the burden of Palestinian political and economic reform on the one hand. At the same time, an enhanced international presence may create new opportunities for effective reforms. As of May 2002, whether or not the micro Israel/Palestine situation will be nested in the triple logic that underlies the macro Mediterranean framework remains uncertain. Conversely, the viability of the EMP may partially hang on this balance.

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