In: IFSH (ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2004, Baden-Baden 2005, pp. 517-532.

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The "Helsinki Coup": A Model for American Democratization Efforts in the Middle East?[1]

On 1 May 2003, as US President Bush announced to the crew of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended", he may well still have believed that regime change by force in Iraq would serve as a signal for the democratization of the entire Middle East.[2] Iraq's self-proclaimed liberators had no idea quite how much resistance they would meet in that ancient land.[3] Six months on – after the initial shine of the military victory had faded, and while terrorists were spreading fear and horror throughout the country, and political reconstruction was held ransom to the power struggle between ethnic, tribal and religious leaders – Washington revised its position. The US administration was no longer willing to stake everything on the domino theory, according to which the fall of Saddam Hussein should have been the beginning of the end for the region's autocratic regimes.

A New "Forward Strategy"

In the keynote speech he gave to members of the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington on 6 November 2003, George W. Bush declared the democratization of the Middle East to be a key goal of American security policy.[4] Two weeks later, speaking in London's Whitehall Palace, he again raised the concept of a "forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East".[5] In a free and democratic Middle East, he argued, the wellspring of hatred and terrorism would dry up. Spreading democracy is thus the strategy of choice for fighting the greatest contemporary danger: weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists and the dictators that support them.

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1 The author would like to thank Bertram Kühnreich for the valuable research and critical comments he contributed to this article.

2 The name of the initiative and the designation of the region vary among "Middle East", "Greater Middle East", "Broader Middle East" "Broader Middle East and North Africa", and "Broader Middle East and the Mediterranean". In this contribution, the expression "Middle East" is used throughout.

3 Cf. President Bush Discusses Iraq in National Press Conference, 6 March 2003, at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-8.html.

4 Cf. President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East, 6 November 2003, at: http://www.ned.org/events/anniversary/oct1603-Bush.html.

5 President Bush Discusses Iraq Policy at Whitehall Palace in London, 19 November 2003, at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031119-1.html.

Democracy and Security

Democratization as a preventive security measure is nothing new in the foreign policy thinking of US governments. As early as 1994, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the Clinton administration's "National Strategy of Enlargement and Engagement" elevated the global promotion of democracy to a strategic goal of American foreign policy. In June 2000, a US-sponsored conference in Warsaw attended by representatives of some 100 states laid the foundations of a "Community of Democracies" – an informal coalition of states for the global promotion of democracy. In the conference's concluding document, the participating states declare the interdependence of peace, development, human rights, and democracy, assert the universality of democratic values, enumerate core democratic principles and procedures, declare transnational terrorism a challenge for democracy, and declare their intention to co-operate in promoting democratic institutions and procedures worldwide and in tackling threats to democracy, such as terrorism.[6] But it was only following the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the shocking realization that the majority of perpetrators and planners originated in Middle Eastern states seen as friendly to the USA that this region, a sphere of US vital interests,[7] became a key target for American democratization plans.

Reform Plans for the Middle East

A beginning was made with the "Middle East Partner Initiative" (MEPI)[8], announced by Secretary of State Colin Powell in a December 2002 speech to the conservative Heritage Foundation.[9] In his speech, Powell paints a dismal picture of the Middle East that draws upon the staggering findings of the UNDP's first Arab Human Development Report (2002) and describes the situation in terms of a "hope gap". MEPI aims to support reforms in the areas of business (competitiveness, investment climate, encouraging entrepreneurialism), politics (democratic procedures, developing civil society, rule of law, independence of the media), education (access to schools, teacher training, curriculum development, IT skills, practical relevance of classroom teaching), and women's empowerment (e.g. the removal of cultural, legal, and economic barriers standing in the way of women's active participation in

6 Final Warsaw Declaration: Toward a Community of Democracies, 27 June 2000, at: http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/26811.htm. For further details, see the Polish government's communiqué: Toward a Community of Democracies, at: http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/26815.htm.

7 Cf. State of the Union Address delivered in Congress on 23 January 1980 by the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, at: http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml.

8 U.S. Department of State, Middle East Partnership Initiative, at: http://mepi.state.gov/mepi/.

9 Cf. U.S. Department of State, The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead, Secretary Colin L. Powell, The Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, 12 December 2002, at: www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110002762.

public life). The way to close the "hope gap" is based on co-operation: "a new American government effort to support the peoples and governments of the Middle East in their efforts to meet these challenging and pressing human needs".[10] However, the programme based on this approach is only marginally better funded[11] than the projects of the Clinton administration, which consisted largely of measures in the area of development policy.[12]

One year after MEPI's launch, Washington's tone had changed completely. Although, in December 2002, Powell had described MEPI as independent from "9/11" and the war against terrorism, and had stressed his desire merely to place the existing policy on a broader footing, by February 2004, the talk was of a "sweeping change in the way we approach the Middle East".[13] This announcement contains elements of both self-criticism and certainty of victory. According to former CIA Director James Woolsey, currently an advisor to Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld, the USA is not blameless with respect to the political situation in the region, which it has long tended to see as its own private "gas station": "One of the reasons democracy has made no progress in the Middle East is our fixation on oil."[14] In his London speech, President Bush struck a similar note, proclaiming that: "Your nation and mine, in the past, have been willing to make a bargain, to tolerate oppression for the sake of stability […] Yet this bargain did not bring stability or make us safe. It merely bought time, while problems festered and ideologies of violence took hold."[15] At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2004, Vice President Richard Cheney drew the full consequences of this approach: "Helping the people of the greater Middle East overcome the freedom deficit is, ultimately, the key to winning the broader war on terror."[16]

In the end, it was Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz who knew how to overcome the freedom deficit and win the war on terror. He recalled the subversive effect of the Helsinki Process, whose human-rights principles once contributed to the victory over the Soviet Union, and argued for a repeat of the "Helsinki Coup" in the Middle East,[17] although it must be

10 Ibid.

11 It received 29 million US dollars in 2002, 100 million US dollars in 2003, and a projected 145 million US dollars in 2004.

12 Cf. International Crisis Group, The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: Imperilled at Birth, ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 7 June 2004, p. 2, footnote 7.

13 Robin Wright/Glenn Kessler, Bush Aims For "Greater Mideast" Plan. Democracy Initiative To Be Aired at G-8 Talks, washingtonpost.com, 9 February 2004, at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A24025-2004Feb8?language=printer.

14 "Wir fangen mit dem Irak an." ["Iraq is Just the Start."], Interview with James Woolsey, by Carolin Emcke and Gerhard Spörl, in: *Der Spiegel* 4/2003, pp. 108f (author's translation).

15 President Bush Discusses Iraq Policy at Whitehall Palace London, cited above (Note 5).

16 The White House, Remarks by the Vice President to the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, 24 January 2004, at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040124-1.html.

17 "Paul Wolfowitz, the number two in the Pentagon, thus confided to his European partners that it was necessary to repeat the 'Coup' of the Helsinki accords, which contributed sig-

noted that, in the current case, it remains unclear precisely what is to be overthrown: the region's regimes or the attractiveness of Islamist extremism.[18]

The Example of Helsinki

In the neo-conservative appropriation of the CSCE Final Act, we can detect an instrumental attitude towards human rights. As long as double standards are applied and human rights are viewed as nothing more than a weapon to be yielded at opponents, this attitude can be condemned as cynical.[19] But Wolfowitz was by no means the only politician in Washington who saw Helsinki as a model for Middle-East reform. Democrat Senator John Edwards campaigned during the 2004 presidential primaries on the platform of establishing a "Helsinki-type organization" for the Middle East, to be tasked with helping to develop civil society and political parties, monitoring elections, and resolving conflicts. "Helsinki" had become a magic word, whose attraction was not limited by party affiliation.

Nor does Washington have a monopoly on the idea of applying Helsinki to fundamentally transform the systems of governance of the Middle East. For the Egyptian sociologist and dissident Said Eddin Ibrahim, who has recently completed a three-year prison term, Eastern European dissidents, who, supported by the "older democracies", successfully stood up to "their" despots, were an inspiration: "Similar post-Helsinki support in the 1970s and '80s hastened peaceful transformations of governance across the former Soviet sphere."[20]

The CSCE Process: An Original and Many Imitations

Helsinki had inspired ambitious reform plans for the Middle East before. Shortly after the Helsinki Final Act was signed in 1975, the then Israeli President, Yitzhak Rabin, speaking at the Congress of the Socialist International in Geneva, suggested applying the model of the CSCE to the Middle East.[21] Since the end of the Cold War, there have been many similar propos-

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nificantly to the fall of the Soviet Union by providing opposition forces with a minimum of publicity, if not protection." Jacques Almaric, La gageure de Bush [Bush's Mission Impossible], in: *Libération* No. 7101, 11 March 2004, p. 44 (author's translation).

18 Cf. Wright/Kessler, cited above (Note 13).

19 Cf. Stephen Holmes, The National Insecurity State, in: *The Nation*, 10 May 2004, at: http://www.thenation.com/docprint.mhtml?i=20040510&s=holmes.

20 Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Dissident Asks: Can Bush Turn Words into Action?, in: *Washington Post*, 23 November 2003, also at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?Pagename=article&contentId=A5291-2003Nov21&notFound=trues.

21 Cf. Frank Schimmelfennig, *Konferenzdiplomatie als regionale Friedensstrategie. Lässt sich das KSZE-Modell auf den Vorderen Orient übertragen?* [Conference Diplomacy as a Regional Peace Strategy. Can the CSCE Model Be Transferred to the Middle East?],

als. The initial momentum came from the crisis and war in the Persian Gulf in 1990-91, which was precipitated by Iraq's invasion of its neighbour Kuwait. The USA succeeded in persuading most of the Arab states to join the military coalition against the Iraqi aggressor, and, in return for supporting American efforts – a decision that was unpopular in their societies – the governments of these states insisted upon a US commitment to resolving the deep-rooted and recurrently violent conflicts that plague the Middle East. At the time, the prospects of success looked good: The USA and the Soviet Union were co-operating in the UN Security Council on managing the Iraq-Kuwait conflict, which suggested that the former rivalry of the two superpowers would not stand in the way of a peace initiative. Four weeks after the start of hostilities, the German Social Democratic politician Willy Brandt presented his proposals for a peace regime [*Friedensordnung*] in the Middle East, which were based on the example of the CSCE. And, while the ceasefire negotiations were still underway at the end of the war, Jordan's Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal – seeking to distract the international community from his country's solidarity with its powerful neighbour – argued for establishing a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Middle East (CSCME).[22] The form taken by the Madrid Middle East Conference of October 1991 – the inclusion of participants from virtually every state in the region, the participation of important external actors, the creation of multilateral working groups on key regional problems beyond territorial conflicts, and the initialization of a follow-up process of negotiations and discussions – also clearly reveals its debt to the CSCE.[23]

The Limits of Transferability

The mood of optimism lasted only a few years. Yet even before the peace process was shattered by the murder of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, expectations had faded that Europe's success story would exercise an irresistible attraction on its neighbouring region. Regional experts had been quick to point out that political arrangements designed by Europeans had a poor track record in the Middle East, which has a deeply rooted strain of resistance to external intervention. Systematic comparisons of the two regions, which revealed major differences in the histories and structures of the con-

Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, No. 60, November 1991, p. 7, footnote 9.

22 See Willy Brandt, Eine Friedensordnung für den Nahen Osten [A Peace Regime for the Middle East], in: *Europa-Archiv* 5/1991, pp. 137-142; Das Jordanische Konzept einer KSZNO. Basierend auf einer Erklärung des jordanischen Kronprinzen El Hassan bin Talal sowie seines umfassenderen Konferenzpapiers [The Jordanian Concept of a CSCME. Based on a Statement of Jordan's Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal and his Detailed Conference Paper], in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 6/1991, pp. 308-311.

23 Cf. Claudia Schmid, Frieden auf Raten? Der Verhandlungsfrieden in Nahost [Peace by Instalments? The Middle East Negotiations], in: Margret Johannsen/Claudia Schmid (eds), *Wege aus dem Labyrinth? Friedenssuche in Nahost* [Ways out of the Labyrinth? Peace Initiatives in the Middle East], Baden-Baden 1997, pp. 12-42, here: pp. 20f.

flicts, likewise appeared to prove the sceptics right. During the Cold War, the conflict in Europe had a structure defined by a bipolar international system with a clear ideological outline, dominated by the leading powers of the two major blocs – the USA and the USSR. Europe's major political disputes were settled by means of several treaties, and the status quo between competing political systems was accepted. Strategic stability was assured by the threat of mutually assured destruction. Finally, the relevant actors were all states and alliances of states. The Middle East conflict region, in contrast, is fragmented and multipolar. Various states are vying for the predominant role, and the USA does not act as the leader of a bloc but merely as the external hegemon. The region's borders are disputed or awaiting recognition under international law, while the development of WMD arms races and asymmetrical warfare are hard to control. Finally, the key actors in the Middle East include not only nation states but also stateless peoples.

It is no accident that the two regions have been compared largely in terms of foreign policy and military strategy. The domestic policies of Middle-Eastern governments were of no importance for international relations during the 1990s. When, in 1991, the US president announced his intention of instigating a "new world order"[24] in the Middle East, his intention was two-fold: to counter the "legitimacy risk" to which the Arab states had exposed themselves by joining the coalition against Iraq, and to grasp the window of opportunity offered by US-Soviet co-operation in the Security Council to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and to tackle a variety of economic, social and security-related problems that stood in the way of the region's peaceful development. The domestic political situation of the Arab states was largely irrelevant to the pursuit of these goals.

Terrorism and Democratic Reform

That was no longer the case after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Since then, the USA has seen the region as the breeding ground for transnational Islamist terrorism, which has declared war on the West. The deeper causes of this are considered to be the region's lack of political and social modernization. Insufficient opportunities for political participation, backward education systems, and the increasing failure of some of the region's economies to adapt in the face of falling revenues, high population growth, and rising unemployment: All provide the radical alternative – militant Islamism – with fertile soil in which to grow.

This diagnosis underlies the US offensive to reform the Middle East. It can be traced back to a variant of the Democratic Peace Theorem. According to this theorem, democracies never go to war against each other. Moreover,

24 Cf. Stanley R. Sloan, *The US Role in a New World Order: Prospects for George Bush's Global Vision*, CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, 28 March 1991.

democratic institutions have a generally moderating influence on society, with the result that external conflicts in general are more likely to be resolved peacefully than in authoritarian systems.[25] The spread of democracy among the states of the world therefore reduces the risk of war and is in the interest of the security of the existing democracies.[26] However, the American campaign does not aim at security from war in its conventional form of a conflict between states, but rather at security from the terrorist activities of substate actors – with or without state support. Democratic states, according to this variation on the theorem, do not bring forth terrorists and are willing to and capable of neutralizing any terrorists acting from within their societies, removing not only the domestic threat, but also the danger to others. To eradicate something rotten in the heart of a society, it is necessary to deprive it of the environment in which it thrives. Democratic reforms rob terrorism, which has declared war on the West and the Western way of life, of the social milieu that gives it succour, they are thus in the interest of Western security.

From Forward Strategy to Partnership

Hot on the heels of the US announcement of a new forward strategy for the Middle East came a working paper, produced for the June 2004 G8 summit, and containing the American version of a "G8 Middle East Partnership".[27] It recognizes the deficits identified in the Arab Human Development Reports 2002 and 2003 as risks for stability and a threat to the common interests of the G8 states. The draft, which was made public in February 2004, calls for medium-strength social, economic, and political measures, but stops short of challenging the region's existing political systems.[28] The measures proposed under the title "Promoting Democracy and Good Governance", such as technical support in registering voters, exchange and training programmes, and academic scholarships, assume that local elites are in favour of democratic reforms and that it is only necessary to provide the necessary knowledge and skills. At the G8 summit meeting on 9 June 2004, the American draft became the G8's "Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa", which, at the EU-US summit held in Dublin on 25-26 June 2004, finally led to the "EU-U.S. Declaration

25 Cf. for example, Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*, Princeton 1993.

26 For a critique of the notion of inevitable historical progress in the philosophy of history, see: Bruno Schoch, Frieden als Progress? Ein Großbegriff zwischen politischem Projekt und Geschichtsphilosophie [Peace as Progress? A Major Concept Between Political Project and the History of Philosophy], in: Mathias Albert/Bernhard Moltmann/Bruno Schoch (eds), *Die Entgrenzung der Politik* [The Deterritorialization of Politics], Frankfurt/New York 2004, pp. 13-39.

27 U.S. Working Paper for G-8 Sherpas, in: *Al-Hayat*, 13 February 2004, at: http://english.daralhayat.com/Spec/02-2004/Article-20040213-ac40bdaf-c0a8-01ed-004e-5e7ac897d678/story.html.

28 Cf. ibid.

Supporting Peace, Progress and Reform in the Broader Middle East and in the Mediterranean".

In the 18 months between Colin Powell's speech and the Dublin Declaration, the initiative changed shape a number of times. As a general tendency, it can be seen to have become more compromise-oriented as the number of states involved has increased. While the earliest statements struck an imperious note, generating lukewarm reactions in Europe and strong protest in the Arab world, the language of the Dublin declaration focused on co-operation. It is politically significant that the reform agenda, which Arab governments had seen as an externally imposed diktat, was now – on the urging of the EU – based on the principle that the regional states were the "owners" of the reform process.[29] However, those who had already decried the February 2004 US working paper as insubstantial,[30] expressed their disappointment that the potentates of the Middle East would be able to relax once more, secure in their position, after this further watering down.[31] Moreover, while the participants at the G8 summit committed themselves to seeking a just peace in the Middle East, this had not yet been a requirement in the American working paper of February 2004. This fuelled suspicion that the democratization offensive had been launched in order to sideline serious efforts to resolve the conflict, especially given Richard Cheney's comments at Davos that democratic reforms were essential preconditions for a peaceful settlement of the enduring Arab-Israeli conflict.[32]

Helsinki and Its Consequences

The Neo-Conservatives have pushed for Helsinki to be used as a model for the democratization offensive. The following considerations address the implications and consequences of this renewed appeal to the CSCE process as carried out in the 1970s and 1980s, this time in seeking the democratic transformation of the Middle East. Beforehand, it is necessary to recall certain structural features of the Helsinki process – to the extent that they are relevant to its borrowing by the Neo-Conservatives. Then this approach needs to be tested for coherence. What interpretation of the CSCE process underlies

29 On the principle of "ownership", see the remarks of the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, Marc Otte, Towards an EU Strategy for the Middle East, World Security Network, New York, 1 March 2004, at: http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_ID=9094.

30 Cf. Marina Ottoway/Thomas Carothers, The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief 29, March 2003, at: http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Policybrief29.pdf.

31 Cf. Marina Ottaway, The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: A Hollow Victory for the United States, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004, at: http://www.ceip.org/files/Publications/2004-06-15ottawayARB.asp?from=pubdate.

32 Cf. Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Wrong Way to Sell Democracy to the Arab World, World Security Network, New York, 8 March 2004, at: http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_ID=9096.

its appropriation? What consequences does this interpretation have for Middle-East policy? Under what conditions can experience gathered in the CSCE process be applied for democratic and peaceful development in the Middle East? How should the USA's new "forward strategy" be evaluated in this context?

If, in invoking Helsinki, the Neo-Conservatives wanted to suggest that the CSCE process was based on a master plan for the collapse of the Soviet empire, they were mistaken. There are certainly no documents in the public domain that support this interpretation. In the early 1970s, as the agenda of a pan-European security conference was being contested, it is highly unlikely that anyone expected it to have such wide-reaching consequences.[33] Nevertheless, this has no bearing on the question of whether the CSCE can stand godfather to a democratization offensive in the Middle East. In the end, history can only be planned to a limited extent. But it is still to the credit of strategists and politicians that they attempt to draw lessons from it and to make plans to implement them.

Two aspects of the CSCE process deserve particular attention, if talk of a repeat of the "Helsinki Coup" in the Middle East is to be take seriously: First, the linkage of security and human rights, and second, the interaction of states and civil-society actors.

Security and Human Rights

The main goal of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975[34] was the "dedramatization of system antagonism".[35] The Soviet Union, whose foreign policy was shaped by the fear of encirclement from the 1920s, had already raised the notion of a pan-European security conference at a meeting of the foreign ministers of the four victorious powers of the Second World War in 1954. The USSR's interest in this concept lay in the possibility of consolidating the territorial and political status quo in Europe by having these recognized by the West. This found expression in two principles of the Final Act of Helsinki: the principle of the inviolability of frontiers (Principle III) and the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs (Principle VI). To achieve this, the Soviet Union was prepared to make concessions; in these, however, it certainly did not see the seeds of a revolutionary transformation of Europe's political landscape.[36] The USA was originally sceptical towards the idea of a pan-

33 Cf. Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect. International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*, Princeton/Oxford 2001, p. 257.

34 Final Act of Helsinki, Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Helsinki, 1 August 1975, in Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, pp. 141-217.

35 Sabine Jaberg, *KSZE 2001* [CSCE 2001], Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, Hamburg 70/1992, p. 7 (author's translation).

36 Cf. Peter Schlotter, *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt* [The CSCE in the Cold War], Frankfurt/New York 1999, p. 167.

European security conference. However, the USA ended its resistance when a forum to deal with America's primary interest of arms control was established in 1973,[37] in the form of the Vienna negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR),[38] – something America had been proposing behind the scenes for years. Thereafter, the USA began to work together with its allies and the neutral and non-aligned states to have confidence-building measures included on the agenda of the conference.[39]

While the interests of both the Soviet Union and the USA could easily be assigned to the dimension of "security", matters were not so straightforward with regard to the principle of "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief" (Principle VII). This principle was included in the document on the insistence of the Western European states, as were the clauses on human contacts and the freedom of information (Basket III). The states of the European Community saw the CSCE as a means for them to participate directly in the détente process, which had previously been limited to the relations between the superpowers and the bilateral treaties between the Federal Republic of Germany and Eastern European countries. In addition, the Federal Republic of Germany used the CSCE and the greater openness of borders it brought about to pursue the goal of improving the situation of the German minorities in the East. These were not questions of international high politics – which were genuine security concerns at a time of militarized confrontation between blocs – but concerned rather the domestic conduct of governments.

The linking of principles and practices of security policy, such as the inviolability of frontiers and confidence building through military transparency, with respect for individual human rights and fundamental freedoms was the result of a shrewd diplomatic compromise in the negotiations between East and West.[40] Even if the Western side did include proponents of the liberal view that democratic ruling structures are a prerequisite for stable and peaceful international relations,[41] in the context of Cold War Europe, there could be no question of assuming a necessary link between human

37 Cf. P. Terrence Hopmann, The United States and the CSCE/OSCE, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2000*, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 63-81, here: p. 64.

38 Cf. Reinhard Mutz (ed.), *Die Wiener Verhandlungen über Truppenreduzierungen in Mitteleuropa* (MBFR) [The Vienna Negotiations on Force Reduction in Central Europe (MBFR)], Baden-Baden 1984.

39 Cf. Wolf Graf von Baudissin, Vertrauensbildende Maßnahmen als Instrument kooperativer Rüstungssteuerung [Confidence-Building Measures as an Instrument of Co-operative Arms Control] in: Jost Delbrück/Norbert Ropers/Gerda Zellentin (eds), *Grünbuch zu den Folgewirkungen der KSZE* [Green Book on the Consequences of the CSCE], Cologne 1977, pp. 215-229, here: pp. 218f.

40 Cf. Götz von Groll/Berthold Meyer, *Noch eine Chance für den Verhandlungsfrieden. Lehren aus der KSZE für eine Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit im Nahen Osten* [One More Chance for Negotiated Peace. Lessons from the CSCE for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Middle East], Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, HSFK-Report 7/1996, p. 39.

41 Cf. Schlotter, cited above (Note 36), p. 163.

rights and security.[42] Finally, the interpretation of the right to self determination in a way that accorded all peoples the right to determine their internal *and* external political status without external interference (Principle VIII) did not see human rights as the means for social transformation and the overcoming of the divided Europe. The possibility of "peaceful change" was more a reflection of West Germany's interest in keeping open the "German question" and the possibility of reunification.[43]

Following the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the principle of human rights had ambivalent effects. Those who, before the end of the Cold War, sought to regulate the framework within which the conflict was carried out, and to reduce the excessive numbers of soldiers and weapons deployed in Europe, prioritized arms control. Human rights was seen as a less effective instrument for anchoring international security in détente.[44] In contrast, those who evaluate the CSCE's human-rights agreements retrospectively from the post-Cold War world tend to take the opposite view, seeing human rights as a dynamic aspect of the CSCE process.[45] These contrasting perspectives lead to a second difference: In evaluating the effectiveness of CSCE norms, the approach that emphasizes arms-control tends to deal with the level of states as actors and inter-state relations, while the human rights-based approach focuses on the CSCE's effect in the sphere of domestic politics.

Helsinki from Below

The signing of the Helsinki Final Act led to a mass mobilization in the socialist countries in the form of the "Helsinki Groups", which established transnational links with the peace movement in the West.[46] They demanded the implementation of the agreements contained in Principle VII and Basket III and expected that the CSCE monitoring process would protect them from repression.[47] In their comportment towards the citizens' movements, the regimes found themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma. The wish to preserve the hegemony of the one-party state by any means necessary contradicted the desire for international legitimacy. Which of these opposing tendencies dominated in a given situation depended on the prevailing climate in East-West relations: a cooling generally signalling increasing repression, a

42 For a critical view of efforts to link arms-control measures (which are an instrument of security policy) with human-rights protection, cf. Reinhard Mutz, Rüstungskontrolle und Menschenrechte [Arms Control and Human Rights], in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 44/87, 31 October 1987, pp. 13-18.

43 Cf. Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* [In My Time], Munich 1996, p. 320.

44 Cf. Mutz, cited above (Note 42), p. 14.

45 Cf. Schlotter, cited above (Note 36), p. 162.

46 Cf. Ben Schennink, Helsinki from Below: Origin and Development of the Citizens' Assembly (HCA), in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 1997*, Baden-Baden 1998, pp. 403-415, here: pp. 404-407.

47 Cf. the country overview in Thomas, cited above (Note 33), pp. 160-194.

political thaw bringing increasing tolerance, until the point was reached where the liberalization of the political system could only have been held back with the help of the army. Several explanations can be offered for the fact that the Soviet Union chose to discard this last option. The renunciation of violent repression was the price the Soviet Union had to pay for the Western economic assistance it hoped would counteract the falling productivity of its planned economy. Renouncing violence in this way was made easier for the Soviet political elites (in particular the reformers around the Soviet head of state, Mikhail Gorbachev) by the interaction of political mobilization within their societies with the international socialization of the USSR. These forces had transformed Soviet elites to the extent that they saw respect for human rights as a higher virtue than the survival of the one-party state.[48]

Helsinki: A Worthless Template?

This is not the place to consider alternative explanations for the end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union, such as the misallocation of resources in the Socialist states as a result of the arms race or the political system. It is enough to recognize that Neo-Conservatives' talk of repeating the "Helsinki Coup" in the Middle East is based on the premise that it was the power of the human-rights stipulations of the CSCE Final Act to dynamize domestic politics in the socialist states that finally led to the dissolution of the Soviet empire and allowed new democracies (which, according to the Democratic Peace Theorem, would no longer pose a threat to the democratic West) to emerge in its former zone of dominance. However, if Eastern and Western states had not both been interested in *improving the security situation* in Europe, the process of compromise that marked the start of the CSCE process would never have occurred. To consider Helsinki as a relevant model for the Middle East purely in terms of human rights and their significance for the transformation of the Socialist states is to ignore the fact that security was the incentive that enabled the Socialist states to accept the unreasonable demands entailed by signing the human-rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. The risks that these stipulations brought for the Socialist regimes weighed less, in their eyes, than the advantages promised by recognition of the territorial status quo. Considerations of stability also played a role for the West in discussions over the CSCE's agenda. Destabilizing the Eastern-European regimes could easily have entailed security risks in the overall context of the bipolar world.[49] But this was something that the West was willing to accept as long as Soviet foreign policy could be contained by

48 Cf. ibid., pp. 229-231.

49 Cf. Henry A. Kissinger, testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 19 September 1974, published in: Supplement to the Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders, 11/1974, AFRP 190-2, Department of the Air Force, Internal Information Division, p. 3.

agreed rules of conduct.[50] To create the preconditions for the expansion of democracy and human rights in Eastern Europe it was thus necessary to first satisfy the complementary security interests of both sides.

The Middle-East Conflict and Democratization

Without a comparable security-policy agenda, the prospects of the human-rights principle alone leading to thoroughgoing social transformation in the Middle East and eliminating the attraction of the religiously codified terrorism of Islamist extremist groups are slender.[51] The difference in the structure and history of the conflicts in Europe and the Middle East has already been touched upon. As far as security issues are concerned, the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict, and, in particular, the core conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, is of paramount importance here.

This long-lasting conflict and the struggle between Arab states over how to deal with Israel have so far hampered regional co-operation efforts, which could have been a motor of economic development superior to the *rentier* economies typical of the region. Of course, there are no guarantees that resolving the conflict would trigger economic and social development and overcome the barriers to modernization. However, a sustainable solution to the conflict – or at least the prospect of one – would significantly raise the incentive for the rulers of the Middle East to take the American reform agenda seriously. It would also improve the chances for the region to develop in the direction of pluralism, and perhaps even democracy – which the American sponsors of the "forward strategy" hope will serve to contain terrorism. For the risks that this agenda entails for the stability of Middle-Eastern regimes are likely to be greater if the level of conflict remains high than if the conflict is resolved or seems on course for resolution. This interpretation of the relationship between the ongoing absence of peace and the stability of the region's regimes may be surprising, seeing that it contradicts the widespread view that the conflict is instrumentalized by the region's autocratic rulers in order to avoid carrying out reforms. However, this objection ignores the ambivalent effect the conflict has on the balance of power between entrenched forces and the reform-minded.

Yes, the conflict does serve to divert the population's dissatisfaction with their social situation towards an external enemy, thus providing conservative forces with an excuse for rejecting reforms. Moreover, it strengthens the role of the military and the acceptance of military solutions as policy op-

50 Cf. Peter Schlotter/Norbert Ropers/Berthold Meyer, *Die neue KSZE. Zukunftsperspektiven einer regionalen Friedensstrategie* [The New CSCE. Perspectives for a Regional Peace Strategy], Opladen 1994, p. 104.

51 Cf. Jochen Hippler, Die Quellen des Terrorismus – Ursachen, Rekrutierungsbedingungen und Wirksamkeit politischer Gewalt [The Sources of Terrorism: Causes, Recruitment Conditions and Effectiveness of Political Violence], in: Bruno Schoch et al. (eds), *Friedensgutachten 2002* [Peace Report 2002], Münster 2002, pp. 52-60, here: p. 58.

tions and is a major reason for the high level of military expenditure in the region. As a result, already rigid structures accrue further potential for entrenchment, which is actually detrimental to the long-term stability of the regimes, since social problems are not removed but rather tend to grow, while young people's expectations are not sinking but rising. At the same time, however, the conflict – especially when the level of violence is high – limits the options available to the political actors that see reforms as important for ensuring regime survival.[52] That is because the longer the violence continues, the more the legitimacy of regimes that have entered into a partnership with the USA is called into question as the impression grows that the USA is not an honest broker and is unconcerned with finding a just resolution. In this climate, being linked with the American democratization offensive – as may happen to reformists – does not necessarily help one's cause, and this can explain why oppositional forces both in the region and in exile have also been hesitant to welcome the US initiative.[53]

The Democratic Paradox

An agenda of democratization for the Middle East, one that is serious about free elections, the rule of law, participation, and plurality, cannot choose which societies to concern itself with. Representatives of civil society will not always be willing to adopt norms that conflict with their own values and traditions. Of course, this is not meant to suggest that "Islam" is incompatible with "democracy". In light of the discussion among Arab intellectuals since the late 1980s on the need for political openness and democratization, such a claim would strike an almost colonialist note. At the same time, democratic forms of government, if they are to function and take root in society, will need not only to take into account historical and cultural particularities, but also to include oppositional groups. In the Middle East, to risk more democracy is to allow Islamist parties, whose support is estimated at 15-30 per cent in most Arab countries,[54] a corresponding level of representation in the political system. In many ways their message resembles that of the Arab Development Reports: They take issue with poor governance and demand democratic rights and the freedom and opportunities for the participation of civil society. As the Arab Development Report 2003 observes, a number of political movements that initially served only to voice their members' grievances and seek redress were driven underground by the unavailability of

52 On the balancing act that the proponents of reform have to perform, see Iris Glosemeyer/ Volker Perthes, *Reformen gegen den Terror?* [Reforms Against Terrorism?], Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP aktuell 48, Berlin, November 2003.

53 Daoud Kuttab, Reform In The Arab World Requires That True Intellectuals Speak Out, in: *Al-Hayat*, 11 April 2004, at: http://english.daralhayat.com/opinion/04-2004/Article-20040411-da7c22e5-c0a8-01ed-004d-659d2780e3f8/story.html.

54 Cf. Volker Perthes, *Geheime Gärten. Die neue arabische Welt* [Secret Gardens. The New Arab World], Berlin 2002, p. 116.

legal means for them to articulate their complaints, and only then did they resort to violence to pursue their political goals.[55]

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Promises made in front of a Neo-Conservative American think-tank still need to be made to work in practice. But the US administration is not exactly known for its willingness to risk more democracy where political Islam is concerned. That was apparent in the recent discussion concerning the inclusion of *Hamas* in the administration of the Gaza Strip, which Israel, according to its prime minister's plan, is due to leave by the end of 2005. Although surveys taken in 2004 show that *Hamas* would be far from winning a majority in any election, but has merely drawn level with *Fatah*, the population was virtual unanimous in supporting its participation in elections and as an equal partner in government. This demonstration of political maturity on the part of the Palestinians did not deter the Americans from rejecting all plans of this kind. The USA can of course only allow itself this kind of interference in the domestic affairs of another polity in cases of "precarious statehood", for example, where experiments in state-building fail, or where the USA has brought about regime change by force. It can only be hoped that Middle-Eastern governments do not interpret the reforms demanded of them in such a selective way.

System Transformation and Stability

It would, however, entail a considerable risk for the region's autocratic regimes to introduce reforms that went much beyond the cosmetic. That they need to risk some reform merely to ensure their long-term survival, and that some sections of the political class are aware of this, have already been mentioned. Nevertheless, this process contains many hidden imponderables. The West would have to accept that there will be changes of policy that are not in its interest, not only regarding unhindered access to oil at moderate and stable prices, but also in other matters such as the stationing of foreign troops, the import of military technology, and the question of nuclear weapons. For the regimes in the region, however, even more could be at stake, namely their very existence. One need only consider the historical record to note that the democratization of premodern systems of government has rarely coincided with regional stability,[56] but has rather tended to be not only turbulent but violent. The peaceful revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe may raise hopes that it can be otherwise. Yet it would be vain to hope for a Middle-Eastern Mikhail Gorbachev. For, as has already been noted above, the Middle East lacks a hegemonic power capable of effectively championing democratic transformation. Following their Iraqi adventure, even US Neo-Conservatives

55 Cf. United Nations Development Programme/Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, *The Arab Human Development Report 2003. Building a Knowledge Society*, New York 2003, pp. 220f.

56 Cf. Edward D. Mansfield/Jack Snyder, Democratization and the Danger of War, in: *International Security* 1/1995, pp. 5-38.

may have come to understand that the hegemonic role of the USA in the Middle East is not strong enough to underpin the wholesale export of democracy.

Nevertheless, the objections given here should not be seen as arguing that Helsinki is completely unsuitable as a model for the Middle East. On the contrary, the CSCE process should certainly continue to act as an inspiration for the democratization project. Yet it can only do so effectively when understood in its full complexity. A selective interpretation that ignores or suppresses its security agenda and idealizes the role and power of civil society not only represents a faulty understanding of the process, but also betrays a susceptibility to seeking a quick fix. Treated as a toolbox, from which one can select the specific means one needs, Helsinki is likely to be of little use.