



# *Workshop Report*

Research Division - NATO Defense College, Rome – December 2010

---

## **“The role of regional actors in conflict management in the Middle East”**

30th November - 3rd December 2010

NATO Defense College – Wilton Park

From 30th November to 3rd December 2010, the NATO Defense College and Wilton Park jointly organized an international research seminar entitled “The role of regional actors in conflict management in the Middle East”, at Wiston House (West Sussex, U.K.). This high level event, run under the Chatham House Rule, brought together about fifty experts, journalists, parliamentarians, decision-makers, ambassadors, diplomats and former ministers from NATO member states and the Middle East. The seminar afforded participants improved insight into the interaction of regional actors, both states and non-state actors, in the process of settling ongoing conflicts and tensions in the Middle East. It also made it possible to envisage new perspectives on the security challenges and strategic issues for all the countries in the region.

Abstract: Regional actors will be brought to play an increasing role in managing conflicts and tensions in the Middle East, be it in Lebanon, Iraq, Iran or Yemen. Among these new actors, Turkey stands out as an essential partner. By contrast, on the subject of Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian relations the United States seem to be the only actor able to originate real progress and provide a guarantee of a negotiated agreement. Greater involvement of regional actors on these two issues would only increase discord and tensions, making a settlement of these two conflicts far more unlikely.

Summary of main points emerging from the seminar:

## ● Middle East security architecture

Three possible scenarios seem to emerge, all giving regional actors an important role:

1] **Progressive establishment of a global partnership based on reciprocal recognition and economic interdependence**, acceptable to the Arab countries, Iran, Turkey and the West. This scenario, while the most desirable, remains very unlikely at present in view of the rivalries between the different Middle Eastern states.

2] **The emergence of a new Cold War** bringing the moderate Arab states, the West and Israel into competition with Iran, which would be supported by certain Arab states pursuing a resolutely anti-Western policy. A Cold War of this sort would translate into a very firm policy of containment of Iran, though this would not entail any military strikes against it. The scenario could feature some new developments if certain Arab states were to switch allegiance (e.g. Lebanon in the event of a pro-Syrian government being elected, or Egypt in the event of the Muslim Brotherhood coming to power). This scenario, which would be favourable to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, could satisfy Turkey, giving it a role both as a sort of arbiter and as a “third way”.

3] **Continuing division of the Middle East into a patchwork**, without clear fracture lines, with diverging interests and shifting alliances according to the issues concerned. This would simply mean a continuation of the current situation in the region. Favourable to Iran, Turkey, Syria, the moderate Arab countries and the United States, this scenario seems at present to be the most likely.

## ● Turkey at centre stage

Turkey has changed policy, no longer responding to events but moving into proactive mode on the basis of the good relations it has established with all its neighbours. The two mainstays of this policy are dialogue and economic interdependence.

Turkey's ambition to become an economic and industrial power underpins the whole of its foreign policy.

Turkish policy is open to contacts with all international actors, be it the European Union, the United States, Russia, China, Brazil, the United Nations or NATO. Turkey

has understood that it is an acceptable partner for the West, for Iran and for the Arab world; it has realized that according to public opinions in the Arab world as a whole it was perceived as a model. It is equally aware that the leaders of the Arab countries do not look favourably on its intrusion into their traditional area of influence.

The new orientation of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East is sustainable and is underpinned by a rational long-term analysis based on “win-win” partnerships and no longer on a “zero-sum game” logic. This is not the result of Turkish frustration at seeing the door of the European Union closed in its face. The new policy line would have developed even if Turkey had joined the European Union. Membership of the European Union is nevertheless one of Turkey’s long-term objectives.

Turkey enjoys excellent relations with Iran and will not do anything likely to trigger off a confrontation with Tehran.

Turkish foreign policy priorities in the Middle East are: the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, settlement of the Iranian crisis, stabilisation of Iraq, and resolution of the crises in Lebanon, Yemen and Sudan.

Considering the country’s profuse activism, the interest of the West is to keep Turkey in NATO, ensuring that it continues to behave positively and does not move over to the anti-Western protest camp. Turkey could reinforce the credibility of NATO partnerships involving the Middle East (Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative) in a number of ways: declaring its readiness to participate in possible NATO stabilization operations within the region, contributing more actively to actions promoted within the framework of military cooperation with MD and ICI States, and helping NATO Member to better understand the Middle East.

### ● **The new British government’s Middle East policy: rationalization of efforts and refocusing on the Gulf**

This rationalization of efforts is prompted by the need to reduce Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) expenditure by 25%. The 5 priorities of the new Conservative/Liberal-Democrat British government are:

- continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process;
- resolution of the Iranian crisis;
- renewal of British presence and influence in the Gulf (as shown by the Queen's recent official visit to the region);
- stabilisation of Yemen ;
- stabilisation of Lebanon and Iraq.

NB: In less than two years, Iraq has moved from first to last position in terms of priorities. Afghanistan is not mentioned since the British, like the Europeans, do not consider it part of the Middle East.

## ● Iran

Iran could actually help resolve tensions and conflicts in the Middle East if it managed to change its outlook on its environment, set up peaceful relations with its neighbours and open up towards the West, while in no way sidelining its legitimate objectives which are not in contradiction with those of its neighbours.

Unlike Turkey, Iran pursues an essentially reactive – as opposed to proactive – foreign policy towards the Middle East. Iran has been perfectly able to capitalize on mistakes by the United States, Iraqi and Israeli to enhance its influence in the region, but has taken no initiative (again because of this tendency to cut itself off from dialogue).

With the exception of its control over Hezbollah, capable of operating in Lebanon and against Israel, Iran does not have the military capacity to move beyond its borders. Its army is essentially defensive, even if it has the capacity to make limited strikes in the Gulf.

Iran is currently an obstacle to the peaceful settlement of tensions and conflicts in the Middle East, mainly because its politicians are on the whole paranoid and do not know the outside world (the “North Korea” syndrome, which accounts for the close collaboration between the two countries). Iran remains a country which cuts itself off and where very few Westerners live. Though they have access to Internet, Iranians have very little exposure to the outside world and no contact with foreigners. Their leaders are convinced that they are besieged and are frightened at the simple prospect of travel

to a Western country. They are convinced that they offer an attractive model of resistance and resilience to counter the Western model. Above all, they fear becoming subject to a foreign power.

Given this widespread schizophrenia, it is difficult to imagine a dialogue with Iranian leaders as likely to prove anything but an exercise in non-communication. That is why it is necessary to ensure the Iranians are given a clearer picture to help them move out of their isolation and allow them to understand for themselves that the outside world is not as they imagine it.

In the meantime, a policy of restraint complemented by the sanctions of the international community seems to be the most rational way to contain Iran, albeit leaving the way open to dialogue.

Financial sanctions are considerably curbing Iran's ability to develop its economy and modernize its oil and gas industry. But most experts think that these sanctions will not suffice to make the regime curtail its nuclear programme. Only an all-inclusive negotiation leaving scope for credible security guarantees would make this possible.

The Iran-Iraq war is a key factor towards understanding the internal and external fracture lines which explain current Iranian policy.

Control of the economy and of the large state-run companies is another key factor in understanding current Iranian policy. The executives of these companies, often affiliated to the Pasdaran, will do all in their power to ensure that their place is not taken by a management team in favour of reform, challenging the financial equilibrium and mechanisms of corruption which have become entrenched over the past two decades.

Iran's objectives can be summed up as follows:

- in national terms: The Iranians, paranoid and convinced that their neighbours are trying to attack them (militarily, economically, diplomatically and culturally) with the support of the major powers, want security guarantees to safeguard their **independence**, the **Islamic Revolution** and their **non-alignment** policy. In the absence of credible international guarantees, the Iranian regime considers that nuclear capacity is the only means of ensuring it sufficient guarantees against

any external aggression. Nuclear capacity also gives Iran “equal” status with the major powers in the ongoing negotiations.

- in regional terms: Iran is striving to **come out of its increasing isolation, assert itself as an essential actor in the energy field and pre-empt the consequences of Western withdrawal from Afghanistan**. Iran sees the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre as a major threat to its security and stability once the Western forces withdraw. Paradoxically, the Iranian government is not favourable to NATO’s withdrawal from Afghanistan, since it perceives the risk of having to bear the direct consequences of destabilization in Afghanistan. This is why Tehran is turning more and more towards the Far East (China, India, Japan, North and South Korea, Indonesia) to set up a constructive dialogue with new partners and establish agreements (particularly with China and India) which will ultimately allow it to manage the threat coming from the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre.

On the other hand, Iran remains very favourable to the American withdrawal from Irak. This is why Tehran hopes that Obama will be re-elected, so as to be sure that there will be no change of heart on withdrawal as a result of a Republican victory in the next US Presidential election.

The Palestinian question is seen only as a negotiating tool with the Arabs, the Israelis and the Western powers. It is not crucial for Tehran.

- in international terms: The Iranian regime, perpetually seeking legitimacy and **recognition of its status as an emerging power**, is striving by all means possible to set up a **direct and visible dialogue with the United States**. President Obama’s policy of outreach has done far more to change the Iranian regime’s self-imposed isolation than military strikes and has provided an argument in favour of all the efforts in Iran to promote dialogue with the West without necessarily making concessions to the West.

Despite their cooperation in civilian nuclear capacity, the Iranian leaders remain diffident towards their Russian counterparts.

The evolution of the Iranian regime is difficult to predict, but three considerations must be taken into account:

1] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei allegedly has end-stage cancer and little likelihood of being able to stay in power for more than a few months (which would explain why he is

in such a hurry to have his son Mojtaba recognized as his official successor by the religious authorities in Qom). Once the personality of the new Supreme Leader becomes apparent, this will be revealing of the regime's probable future evolution.

2] President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has no intention of modifying the Constitution to stand for office for the third time (two being the maximum number of terms in office). He should thus stand down in the spring of 2013. However, in the time remaining until then he will do everything possible to ensure that his successor comes from a background in the Pasdaran or the Basij.

3] Mahmoud Ahmadinejad seems determined to proceed with a constitutional revision which would make the office of Supreme Leader largely honorary, giving the incumbent vast moral authority but leaving him with practically no real power. This power shift would benefit the executive (President and government). The central role of the Pasdaran would be reaffirmed and consolidated. This constitutional revision could take place after the death or resignation of Ali Khamenei and before the end of Ahmadinejad's mandate.

## ● The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are at a standstill. There is every indication that they will remain so as long as the current coalition stays in power in Israel and intra-Palestinian reconciliation remains unachieved. On both sides, there is broad agreement on prioritizing an "envisaged end state" based on the positions of principle defended by each party. Israelis and Palestinians recognize that they can agree on borders (implying territorial exchanges), demilitarization of Palestinian territories, security agreements and sharing of water. On the other hand, the negotiations are stalling on the fate of refugees, but above all on the status of Jerusalem. It is on these two points that the intervention of regional actors like Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria or even the League of Arab States considerably complicates negotiations and proves extremely counter-productive. In the Palestinian view, there are too many outside actors trying to push their own agenda without any real concern for the fate of the Palestinians.

The continuing building of new settlements has become a focal point for both parties, undoubtedly because of the excessive media cover which has led to each side becoming entrenched in an ideological position. To settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is important to abandon this ideological stance.

Israelis and Palestinians consider that their negotiations must be pursued in the framework agreed by the Quartet, in close coordination with Egypt and Jordan. It is nevertheless widely recognized that only the United States hold the key to achieving an acceptable and sustainable solution.

Whatever the solution Israelis and Palestinians agree on, it must be based on a system of responsible and stable states and a regional cooperation system resting on mutual security, good governance and economic development. The crucial problem is still the absence of leadership and political courage on either side. For the moment, the Israeli government is fully satisfied with the status quo, while the Palestinian leadership also seems to find this better than an uncontrollable evolution which would hasten its fall and bring Hamas to power.

If the standstill in the peace process should persist, it is unlikely, given the Palestinian population's growing frustration, that the status quo can last indefinitely. Three scenarios thus seem likely:

1] **Unilateral declaration of the existence of a Palestinian state**, as was the case in Kosovo and Abkhazia, hoping that this declaration is initially backed by a certain number of States and then, as time passes, by a growing number of international actors. This scenario, reinforced by the recent recognition of the Palestinian State by several South American states, seems to be favoured by Saeb Erekat, in charge of the Palestinian peace process negotiation unit, and by Salem Fayad, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority. Supporters of this option are aware that it would trigger off unilateral reactions from Israel, but they hope that it would place the Palestinian people in a position of greater responsibility, increase Israel's international isolation and accelerate the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process.

2] **Dissolution of the Palestinian Authority**. Given the impossibility of making a piecemeal Palestinian State work, partly occupied as it is by Israeli defence and security forces, the Palestinian Authority could decide to dissolve so as to make the Israeli



government face up to its responsibilities – be they economic, humanitarian or security-related – as an occupying power. Israel would be considered a tutelary power with immediate effect in such a scenario and would have to reoccupy the territories in their entirety by military means, guaranteeing the Palestinian population as a whole the rights it can claim entitlement to by virtue of international humanitarian law conventions. This option, which would be costly for Israel (in financial, military and political terms), would be favoured by a majority of Palestinian Authority leaders. For its supporters, it would afford the advantage of increasing Israel's international isolation. Mahmoud Abbas would consider it as a last resort option likely to unleash a salutary shock within the international community, in the Arab world and in Israeli society. The main weakness of this option is, however, that it implies a tacit agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas so as to dissolve Palestinian institutions on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at the same time – an agreement which currently seems unfeasible.

### **3] An uncontrollable eruption of violence potentially leading to a new Intifada.**

Whether on a planned basis or more likely as a result of tensions or disputes degenerating into uncontrolled confrontations, segments of the Palestinian population who have lost all hope of seeing their unfavourable situation improve could engage in a new armed confrontation targeting the symbols of Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories, with the support of some Israeli Arabs. The issue of such a confrontation would probably not be in doubt, unless it were to erupt during an armed conflict between Israel and Lebanon, Syria or Iran, but it would contribute to increasing Israeli isolation internationally. From a Palestinian perspective, such a confrontation would facilitate intra-Palestinian reconciliation and could provide the salutary shock needed to convince the Israeli population of the need to reach a definitive agreement on the status of the territories. From an Israeli perspective, such a confrontation could only lead to further radicalization of the Israeli population, reinforce the ultrareligious and ultranationalist right wing and possibly lead to massive enforced transfers of Palestinians.

## ● The Israeli-Syrian conflict

Israel and Syria are both convinced that it would be very much in their interest to reach a peace settlement, for a number of reasons (regarding domestic and foreign policy, as well as economic and security matters). No further obstacle seems to stand in the way of agreement between the two sides: whatever the borders agreed on (French mandate or 1949 cease-fire), Syria will not gain the direct access it has been striving to obtain for many years to the waters of the Sea of Galilee, the level of which has fallen considerably over the past decade<sup>1</sup>. The Israelis seem ready to restore Golan to the Syrians, who in turn seem ready to extend the demilitarized zone, while both sides seem prepared to accept a credible international presence to ensure that the application of any peace agreement is properly monitored.

Paradoxically, neither Israel nor Syria seems in a hurry to conclude such an agreement, each contenting itself with the status quo in the absence of any mutual trust. Given this reciprocal mistrust, the two sides are asking for the intervention of a third party capable of ensuring that the agreement is respected while providing security guarantees to both. Turkey could have played this role, but Israel does not trust it to do so. Russia too could fulfil this need, but does not seem in a position to do so. The United States are thus at present considered by both parties to be the only actor capable of fulfilling this responsibility in overseeing an agreement between Israel and Syria.

Unless the United States quickly take on this responsibility, which would not be impossible despite their failure on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the status quo should remain unchanged in the short to mid term. However, a number of factors seem to indicate that the Israeli government is currently trying to convince the U.S. administration to become seriously involved in this issue, applying its strategy of permanent balance between the Syrian and the Palestinian issues by advancing the claims of each side in the negotiation in turn so as to put increased pressure on the other.

---

<sup>1</sup> To date, negotiations have stumbled as a result of the Syrian authorities claiming access to the waters of the Sea of Galilee so as to have a water supply for the Golan Heights. The Israeli authorities wanted to maintain their monopoly on access to these waters, considering them a vital resource for Israeli agriculture.

## ● The Lebanese crisis

In the short term, the stability of Lebanon depends on the results of the International Tribunal's inquest following the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. If any Syrian involvement seems to have been ruled out for political reasons (Syria's will to break out of its diplomatic isolation), the involvement of Hezbollah members (both former and current) in actually carrying out the attack seems to be evident and difficult to disprove. Were any of its members to be investigated or convicted, however, this would be considered a declaration of war by Hezbollah, refusing as it has to date the "Libyan option" (so called to underline the analogy with the Lockerbie inquest) – i.e. conviction of Hezbollah members as individuals, with no reference at all to their affiliation to Hezbollah. Close negotiations between the Lebanese government, the international tribunal, Hezbollah and certain key regional actors are allegedly in progress with a view to negotiating a way out of the crisis.

Should tensions within the country return brutally to the fore, the hypothetical scenario of Hezbollah seizing power appears totally inconceivable. It has neither the will nor the means to do so, preferring to keep its "king-maker" and "blocking force" status. Too close an association with Lebanese power would mean that Hezbollah would in practice waive its principal vocation as an armed militia at the service of Iranian interests. This is why it is paradoxically in Hezbollah's interest for Saad Hariri to remain in power, considering that he provides their most effective shield both against Israel and against the international community.

On the other hand, should the country become severely destabilized, the hypothesis of the Hariri government's overthrow in favour of a new pro-Syrian government seems altogether plausible. However, the most likely scenario is one of "controlled instability" of the Hariri government, which would slow down the institutional business of the Lebanese State but preserve the vital interests of the main political actors.

In the mid term, the stability of Lebanon will depend on Israel's willingness or reluctance to confront Hezbollah, especially if Iran is suspected of having nuclear strike capacity. Israel, which seems unable to obtain United States approval for military strikes against the Iranian nuclear programme, could be tempted to turn against Hezbollah so as to pre-empt potential trouble from this quarter and thus avoid any

further risk of escalating confrontation with Iran, which might ultimately lead to a nuclear crisis between Jerusalem and Tehran.

In the longer term, the stability of Lebanon will of course depend on a possible peace settlement between Israel and Syria and a security architecture giving regional actors an important role. In this respect, if Syria and Iran are in agreement regarding the influence they respectively wield in Lebanon (as shown by the Iranian President's recent official visit to Lebanon, reciprocated by the Lebanese Prime Minister's visit to Tehran), the likelihood of Syrian military intervention in the event of fresh armed confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah seems very remote. The Wikileaks affair has recently confirmed that the Syrian authorities would refuse to intervene directly against Israel in the event of an Israeli confrontation with Hezbollah, unless they were to be directly attacked themselves.

## ● The Iraqi crisis

There is universal agreement that Iraq is today at a crossroads. Its future remains highly uncertain and unpredictable, despite the agreement to keep Nouri al Maliki in office as Prime Minister. Nevertheless, the country has potentially important human and economic resources – particularly in terms of oil and gas. Iraqi experts estimate that full recovery of the country's political system, economy and society will take from 5 to 15 years.

Several scenarios are envisageable:

1] **A return of strong Arab and Iraqi nationalism**, this being the only way of uniting the Shia and Sunni Arab communities which account for 80% of the country's population, ensuring sustainable national unity and erecting a "shield" against Iranian activism in the region. This hypothesis seems to be strengthened by the "disclosures" from certain Arab leaders in the Wikileaks affair (favouring the return of a certain form of authoritarian rule in Iraq), but also by the recent mood of Iraqi society (the population's feeling of victimization and resentment vis-à-vis their neighbours) and the vindictive populist articles which have been flooding the Iraqi press irrespective of party

allegiances<sup>2</sup>. This resurgent nationalism is probably intended to counter growing Iranian influence, delegitimize the Kurdish minority again<sup>3</sup>, make Syria vulnerable, and dispute certain stretches of the border with Kuwait (still seen as an Iraqi province) and Iran (concerning the status of the Shatt al-Arab)<sup>4</sup>. This instrumentalized resurgence of Iraqi nationalism could thus lead to new tensions with Iran, Kuwait and Syria. With regard to possible tensions between Iraq and Kuwait, most experts from the region consider that, instead of relying on the UN Security Council and security guarantees from Washington, the Kuwaiti authorities should start direct talks with the new Iraqi government, once in office, to settle these tensions diplomatically, perhaps under the auspices of regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and even Iran.

2] **Sustainable maintenance of divisions and instability**, balanced by a partial economic upturn as a result of the progressive restoration and modernization of the oil and gas sector. This scenario is based on the consideration that none of the Iraqi leaders has the necessary charisma, legitimacy or popular support to emerge as a new unrivalled leader. The chief consideration in support of this scenario is that it is in the interest of none of Iraq's neighbours (Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria) to see Iraq re-emerge as a powerful regional actor, even if all of them – for different reasons – stand to gain from its stabilization.

A first variant on this scenario is that Iraq, after progressively curbing Iranian influence within its borders, could become part of a pro-Western north-south axis by bolstering its economic and political cooperation with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. This is the ideal scenario for the GCC States, but not the most likely.

In the current state of affairs, the most likely scenario is that Iraq will pragmatically opt to join a bloc of essentially economic, political and cultural cooperation involving Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. This bloc, dominated by Shia regimes, would not however be strong enough – if only because of internal rivalries between its members – to develop into a military or security alliance capable of challenging the tacit alliance between the

---

<sup>2</sup> A growing number of press articles call on the new Iraqi government to “correct Saddam’s mistakes”, seen as having forced the country to accept a disadvantageous redefinition of its borders.

<sup>3</sup> In the last general election, 55% of Iraqis in the region of Kirkouk and Mossoul opposed the Kurdish autonomy, whereas five years before 80% of them supported it.

<sup>4</sup> The border agreements with Iran (1975) and Kuwait (1993) now seem to be seen as illegitimate by the great majority of the population.

West and the moderate Arab states. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the extreme diffidence of the GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, towards Iraq, as reflected in the very small number of Arab ambassadors present in Bagdad. Supporters of this scenario consider that Saudi Arabia could be satisfied with an Iraq dominated by the Shia, provided that the Iraqi regime pursues a nationalist agenda and does not enter an alliance with Iran or Syria.

Whatever the outcome, what seems sure is that Turkey, with a strong economic presence in Iraq, will emerge as a key actor for the country's future.

## ● The crisis in Yemen

Four factors make Yemen a failed State: despotic and predatory authoritarianism, a state structure based on tribal alliances, poverty and unemployment (the population has increased threefold in 30 years), and the endemic presence of terrorist movements inspired by Al Qaïda. The risk of kidnappings or terrorist attacks targeting foreigners is still high. The country seems to have become one of the worldwide hubs for trafficking in light arms. There is thus a real risk that a Somali-type scenario will develop in Yemen.

Yemen's difficulties are first and foremost domestic. Iran is often blamed for the Houthi revolt in the northern (mainly Shia) province of Yemen in 2009, but was probably not to blame. This reasons for this uprising had been festering for a number of years. Contrary to the allegations of a number of countries, the rebels were not armed by Tehran, though the Iranian regime seemingly capitalized on the ongoing crisis to place Riyadh in a position of difficulty after the Saudi military intervention at the country's border with Yemen.

Yemen has an important card to play: its oil industry (70% of the country's income). Settlement of the Yemen crisis is possible; it presupposes three conditions, in which regional actors have a role to play:

1] **Implementation of a real neighbourhood policy**, with a view to including Yemen within the area of prosperity formed by the Gulf Cooperation Council. An ambitious neighbourhood policy of this sort would imply:

- a change of attitude by Saudi Arabia, which still considers Yemen as its backyard, opposes its integration into the institutions of the Gulf, seemingly tries to keep Yemen in a state of relative weakness and continues to finance Wahabite Koranic schools throughout the country.
- greater involvement of the GCC in Yemen, following the recent and welcome opening of a GCC liaison bureau in Sanaa.
- widespread willingness of the GCC countries to take advantage of the plentiful supply of Yemenite labour.
- progressive integration of Yemen into the GCC.

2] **Better coordination of Western aid**, be it in the political, economic or humanitarian field or in terms of security cooperation.

3] **Stepping up of the activities of the “group of friends” of Yemen**, comprising the United States, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, to negotiate a solution with a view to preserving a centralized and stable State. Most experts agree that a federal solution is to be considered dangerous for the future of the country and the region.

## ● **Conclusions:**

- **The loss of credibility of the United States in the Middle East**, as a result of their incapacity to exert pressure on the Israeli government, their withdrawal from Iraq, their indecision regarding the Iranian crisis and the disastrous consequences of the Wikileaks affair.
- **Recognition of Israel’s capacity to destabilize the region as a whole**, making its inclusion in any serious negotiation on the future of the region indispensable.
- **The growing and essential role of Turkey.**
- **The pivotal role of Iraq and Syria**, situated as it is at the interscction of two opposed axes (a pro-Iranian East-West axis and a pro-Western North-South axis).
- **Acknowledgment of Iran as an emerging regional power**, capable of playing a positive or a negative role.

- **The progressive loss of importance of Egypt and Saudi Arabia**, no longer able to continue playing the role they have fulfilled until recently.
- **The activism of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates**, striving as they are to balance the relatively inactive role of Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
- **The need for closer coordination with NATO, the EU and the League of Arab States**, to maximize potential synergies and avoid futile rivalries.

Pierre RAZOUX

Senior Research Advisor

Head of the Middle East Research Programme

NATO Defense College

Via Giorgio Pelosi 1 – 00143 Rome – Italy

[p.razoux@ndc.nato.int](mailto:p.razoux@ndc.nato.int)