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## EUROPE'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST: ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES

by Harvey Sicherman

Assessing the prospects for the emergence of a West European "super-state" in the early sixties, the late Raymond Aron concluded that "the present mixture of cooperation and integration in Europe and within the Atlantic Alliance is sufficient to assure the achievement of prosperity and security."<sup>1</sup> In the seventies, this assertion was undermined by events, perhaps the major upheaval being the October 1973 Middle East war and the subsequent escalation of oil prices. Now in the eighties, both Europeans and Americans are groping toward a new mixture of cooperation to achieve prosperity and security. Not surprisingly, their respective approaches to the Middle East form a kind of litmus test: whether the Europeans, acting together, can provide an additional dimension of security; whether the United States and its European allies can find a way to work successfully on security issues that go beyond the formal boundaries of NATO but still affect it.

The Middle East is unforgiving ground for the development of these new relationships. American and European attempts to deal with its violent and enduring conflicts have been marked by unseemly rivalries, if not outright antagonism. It was there, after World War II, that the British and French fought unsuccessfully to retain their imperial influence; it was there, at Suez in 1956, that their chief NATO ally, the United States, broke dramatically with Europe on an "out of NATO area" crisis; it was there, too, in 1973-74, that the United States and its allies clashed over the oil crisis and how to handle it. Yet it remains the case that the Middle East's importance to Europe and the United States — and the danger of failure — is so great that the allies can shrink from the task of working together only at their mutual peril.

For Europe, the Middle East offers an additional challenge. The quest for European integration, despite its emphasis on economic relationships, always had at its core a belief that such integration would redound to the benefit of European and world peace. Sooner or later,

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Aron, "Old Nations, New Europe," in Stephen Graubard, ed., *A New Europe?* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), p. 61.

Harvey Sicherman is a consultant on International Relations living in the Washington, D.C. area. Currently an Adjunct Scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, he was FPRI's Associate Director from 1978 to 1980. Dr. Sicherman served as Special Assistant to Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Jr., from 1981-82.

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this historic "turning in" of the European nation-states would have to "turn out," to deal with Europe's international role. While Western Europe has experimented with the forms of integration, West European interests abroad have also grown. But how can those interests be protected? The empires, their armies, and fleets are no more, and utter dependence on either American policy or economic self-interest seems a poor and vulnerable substitute.

Thus, the difficult quest for a collective European role in the Middle East has taken place in the context of an equally uneasy search for transatlantic cooperation in dealing with the region's troubles. Neither can be said to have been entirely successful and sometimes, the achievement of one has come at the expense of the other. In April of 1982, a multinational force including U.S. and West European troops, took up positions in the Sinai desert to support the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, an act of reluctant transatlantic cooperation that shook European pretensions to an independent role. But on February 6, 1984, when the United States informed the British, French, and Italian governments of its intention to redeploy its Marine Amphibious Unit from the Beirut airport area to ships offshore, a promising experiment in such cooperation came to a disastrous conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

Can a European Middle East policy stand on its own? Is a unified European approach to the Middle East necessarily incompatible with American policy? Can the United States and its allies find some successful pattern for dealing with the Middle East that can be extended to other out-of-NATO-area crises? The story of the search for both the common European policy and its relationship to transatlantic cooperation is a convoluted tale, rendered more complex in the telling by the interplay of mixed motivations and interests. Nonetheless, the record is well worth examining, especially the Sinai and Beirut chapters. These episodes have a great deal to tell about what works and what does not work as the United States and the Europeans deal with the Middle East — and each other.

### Origins of the European Policy

The sources of a common European policy toward the Middle East are to be found in two trends that accelerated after the 1967 Arab-

<sup>2</sup> In announcing the redeployment on February 7, 1984, Reagan said that "to enhance the safety of American and other multinational force personnel in Lebanon," U.S. ships and aircraft would target "any units firing into greater Beirut from part of Lebanon controlled by Syria" and "any units directly attacking American or multinational force personnel or facilities." See *New York Times*, February 27, 1984, for an account of the ambiguity that enveloped both the Administration and its critics on the issue of whether this meant U.S. naval forces would aid the Lebanese government directly.

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Israeli war. The first was the progressive increase in Europe's dependence on Middle Eastern oil (rather than indigenous coal) as crucial to European economic growth. The second was the progressive loss of direct influence over events in the area, as the British and French empires passed into history. Almost in confirmation of the waning European role, the four-power talks on the Arab-Israeli conflict, proposed by deGaulle in 1969, were overshadowed by the more intimate two-power talks between the United States and the Soviet Union the same year. Both ended in stalemate, and after de Gaulle left the scene, the illusion of a "four-power" settlement was never revived.<sup>1</sup> Finally, further to the east of Suez, the British gave up their historic security functions in the Persian Gulf in 1971, despite the importunings of the smaller Gulf states. The era of European domination was over.

Hard as it may be to recall today, the push for European unity was then in full flower, with Britain's entry into the Common Market the key issue. A "coordinated" foreign policy to complement a "harmonized" economic policy was a crucial objective and the Middle East, so important to Europe and so much a part of her history, appealed for a variety of reasons. The British and French saw European unity as a way to reassert influence from a stronger base. The smaller states saw the opportunity to act on a larger stage. The Germans, whose postwar policy sought both safety and identity in a larger European grouping, were interested in a less risky approach that would enable the Federal Republic to go beyond the politics of atonement for Nazi crimes in dealing with the Middle East. As a consequence, the Middle East became prime subject matter for the new European Political Cooperation System, established in the early seventies.<sup>4</sup>

The first fruits of the search for a common position were distinctly unwelcome to the United States. The European states had been much quicker than the United States to appreciate what the American need for Middle Eastern oil imports in 1971-72 meant for the overall balance between demand and supply. When the October 1973 war broke out, they were well advanced in the belief that only a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on terms that went well beyond Israel's negotiating positions would protect European interests. The extent to which oil de-

<sup>1</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), p. 350 et passim.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, R. B. Sostendorp, "Dutch Foreign Policy with Respect to the Middle East"; Claude Imperiali and Pierre Agate, "La Politique Extérieure de La France et Le Proche Orient"; and Udo Steinbach, "German Policy on the Middle East and the Gulf," papers prepared for a Colloquium on European Foreign Policy Making and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, organized by the Europa Institute of the University of Amsterdam in collaboration with the Trans-European Policy Studies Association (Brussels) and the Interdisciplinary Study Group on European Integration [The Hague] Amsterdam, February 3-4, 1983. The key documents on the European Political Cooperation System were the 1970 Davignon Report and the 1973 Copenhagen Report which called for a European position as a "distinct entity."

pendency guided European actions and resolutions during the war shocked American officials, with the French assuming their customary role as most abrasive.<sup>5</sup> But the European stance did not protect Europe from oil shortages, and the unwillingness of the British and French to support the Netherlands — singled out by the Arab embargo as a state reputed to be pro-Israeli and also the center of the West European oil network — shattered many illusions about the strength of Europe's unity.<sup>6</sup>

In the wake of the war, the Europeans acted to repair their relations with the United States while still hoping to obtain a favorable position with the Arab oil exporters. On the one hand, resolutions were passed to show the Saudis and others that Western Europe supported a settlement more favorable to Arab interests than the United States. On the other hand, Europe cooperated with the United States in taking protective measures, such as the International Energy Agency and, for all practical purposes, pursued a diplomacy that left the main action to the United States. Thus, Europe moved gradually toward the Arab position that an independent Palestinian state to be led by the PLO was the only acceptable outcome of the quarrel, but not far enough beyond American positions to interfere seriously with the U.S.-sponsored disengagement talks of 1974-75.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Risks and Rewards*

This process necessarily involved the risks of increasing friction with all parties but especially with Israel and the United States. The Europeans did not seem too concerned about friction with the Israelis, perhaps because the purpose of their diplomacy was to become a friend in court between the United States and the Arab oil producers, rather than an intermediary between the Arabs and Israel. This was difficult enough, involving fractious verbal compromises among the British, French, and Germans, who had to reconcile their own preferences with the wishes of the smaller states; yet not to over-promise the Arabs or over-endorse Washington when either excess was sure to risk Arab or U.S. retaliation for failure to deliver.

This line became increasingly difficult to follow in the late seventies as U.S. policy seemed to veer toward the Europeans at the beginning of the Carter administration, then reversed course to conclude the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, only to

<sup>5</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), p. 905 et passim.

<sup>6</sup> See Romano Prodi and Alberto Clo, "Europe," *Daedalus*, Fall 1975.

<sup>7</sup> See Udo Steinbach, "Western Europe and EEC Policies Toward Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Countries," in Colin Lagum, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey* (London: Holmes and Meier, 1947).

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change direction once again thereafter. Carter's position on the Palestinian homeland and the comprehensive approach (an international conference at Geneva to include the USSR) took the Europeans by surprise. The Palestinian homeland idea, however, enabled the Europeans to step closer towards endorsement of the Rabat Resolution of 1974 (which gave the PLO exclusive custody of the Palestinian claims), than they could have done without arousing American ire. Subsequently, the Europeans hailed the Camp David Accords of September 1978, only to distance themselves from the March 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty under the pressure of the energy crisis after the fall of the Shah. They were spared the weight of U.S. displeasure by the Carter administration's own conclusion that the best response to the crisis was to expand the Camp David process, even if it meant an indirect overture to the PLO.<sup>9</sup>

Assigned a special role by Washington to increase pressure on Israel, the Europeans, led by the Germans, began the diplomacy that led to the Venice Declaration of 1980, urging that the PLO be "associated" with any negotiation.<sup>10</sup> But by that time, Carter's original maneuvers had been defeated by the Andrew Young affair and election year sensitivities.<sup>10</sup> The Camp David Process would have to wait. And Venice, out of which grew the notion of a "European initiative," left the Europeans well positioned if the new U.S. administration chose to take up where Carter had been forced to stop.

### *The European Consensus*

At this point, the European position on the issues of the Middle East had hardened into a characteristic approach:

(1) The Arab-Israeli conflict was considered by many, especially the British and French foreign policy establishments, as the most important threat to oil supplies. In their view the rapid resolution of this conflict was the most significant, perhaps the only way, to eliminate that danger. Neither the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, nor the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, all posing a threat to the oil fields but none concerned with Israel or the claims of the Palestinian/Arabs, changed this assumption.

(2) The European experts and a growing number of politicians believed that at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict lay the Palestinian

<sup>9</sup> See Hedlock Smith, "U.S. is Urging Speed in West Bank Talks," *New York Times*, August 2, 1979, and Harvey Sicherman, "The Politics of Dependence," *ORBIS*, Vol. 23, No. 4, Winter 1980, pp. 852-54.

<sup>10</sup> Text to be found in Adam Garfinkle, *Western Europe's Diplomacy and the United States* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Policy Papers, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1981) Appendix G.

<sup>11</sup> Sicherman, "Politics of Dependence." See the *New York Times*, October 29, 1979, for a good summary of the Young affair.

claims for self-determination or a state, increasingly endorsed as morally and politically just. In the European view, the exchange of territory captured by Israel in 1967 for peace, as ordained by UNSC242 (1967) would, therefore, have to include a Palestinian state as part of the solution.

(3) The PLO was seen as an essential participant in the peace process and the probable leader of a nascent Palestinian state. To many European analysts, the PLO and Arafat were a typical native elite, heirs of the only elite in the Middle East who had failed to gain statehood following the breakup of the Ottoman empire and the various semi-colonial regimes run by the British and French until the end of World War II. In the seventies this view was reinforced by Israel's loss of support among the European "left," such as the Socialist International, that began to regard the PLO as a typical national liberation movement.<sup>11</sup>

(4) Except for continuous endorsement of Israel's right to exist, the European statements were usually sharp critiques of Israeli policy.

(5) The European diplomatic role was not precisely defined. There were occasional references to participation in peace-keeping forces and guarantees, but the specifics of both the European diplomacy and ways to insure a lasting settlement were vague.

(6) The Europeans granted to the United States the primacy of initiative and mediation, but preferred an enlarged process eventually to include the USSR (and themselves) at some Geneva-style conference. Partisans of a comprehensive settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict, they criticized U.S. approaches that tended to exclude the USSR and to deal piecemeal with parts of the conflict — for instance, the disengagement agreements and, to some extent, Camp David itself.

These positions were strongly opposed by Israel, mostly favored by many in the American policy establishment — though not by formal American policy — and deemed worthy of encouragement by such pro-Western Arab states as Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

### **The Evolution of European Politics**

In the spring of 1978, France, Holland, and Ireland, acting under U.N. auspices with the European Community's (EC) blessing, added another dimension to the common policy. They joined the UNIFIL force in Southern Lebanon which was intended to preserve peace on the Israel-Lebanon border after Israel's "Operation Litani." UNIFIL failed for a variety of reasons: residual PLO and Israeli-sponsored forces insisted that each be removed first before U.N. control could be extended; the U.N. forces themselves were responsive to a Security Council that the Israelis regarded as hopelessly biased. Faced by a Soviet veto on the one side

<sup>11</sup> See Carl Gershman, "The Socialists and the PLO," *Commentary*, October 1979.

and Israel's pleas on the other side, Washington despaired of doing anything constructive in New York. As a consequence, though their forces were at risk in southern Lebanon, the French and the other Europeans found the U.N. — their chosen forum of diplomatic influence — to be useless.

The UNIFIL experience, which should have given pause to any further contemplation of a European role, was reinforced by two new developments, already visible in early 1981, that further undercut the rationale for fresh European initiatives on the Middle East. The *first* was a rapid change in the European public agenda which left little room and less incentive to try risky business elsewhere. The successive economic crises of the past decade were now joined by a security crisis — the impending deployment of U.S. missiles under the NATO two-track decision of December 12, 1979. Caught between economic distress and the defense issue, long-governing Social Democratic parties in Europe were fractured both at home and abroad. Prime Minister Thatcher won a resounding victory over a Labour Party that sounded increasingly neutralist and anti-American. After a prolonged political agony, Chancellor Schmidt resigned, having lost the confidence of his party rather more than the approval of his countrymen. In France and the southern tier, Social Democrats gained office, but their rhetoric was transformed not long afterwards into economic policies as austere as those of their more conservative predecessors. In view of these events, the Middle East seemed a poor place to try one's reputation or to expend political chips. Only in France, where the constitution gave the presidency much greater authority than a typical parliamentary democracy, was Mitterrand free to pursue his vision of expanded French influence. His was a vision, however, that did not include a common European approach based on Venice.

The *second* was a rapid change in the oil markets which, when combined with a rising U.S. dollar, had peculiar effects on Europe. The second oil crisis of 1979 had been alleviated in part by a falling dollar (the oil trade uses the dollar as its medium of exchange), cushioning Europe from the full impact of the price rise even as it alarmed Europeans once more about the prospect of shortages. Now in 1981, years of conservation induced by higher prices, the search for alternatives and ailing economies had depressed demand for OPEC oil dramatically.<sup>12</sup> The resulting oil surplus relieved the upward pressure on prices, strained

<sup>12</sup> In 1973, for example, the European Community imported 61.3 percent of its oil. In 1982, owing in large part to British North Sea production, this was reduced to 36 percent (see *European Economy*, no. 16, July 1983). As for the United States, in 1973 the United States imported just over 6 million barrels per day (mbd) of which almost half came from OPEC. In 1982, U.S. net imports fell to just 4.2 mbd, of which, again, less than half came from OPEC. In percentage terms this represents a 30 percent decrease. Unlike the European case, however, the percentage of OPEC oil imported remained roughly constant (U.S. Dept. of Energy, *Monthly Energy Review*, March 1983, pp. 39, 44, cited in Robert J. Lieber, *The Oil Decade*, [New York: Praeger, 1983] p. 97).

OPEC's capacity to resist a falling market and dulled the cutting edge of a potential embargo. Simultaneously, the rising U.S. dollar, pegged to high U.S. interest rates, increased the European oil bill.<sup>11</sup> There was little that the Europeans could do on the political front to affect these events, undercutting a policy direction often justified obliquely as essential to economic stability.

These political and economic developments eroded the European focus on the Middle East and the urgency to do "something" about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Paradoxically, however, the two states most supportive of the original search for a common policy — Britain and France — now embarked on fresh initiatives. For British Foreign Minister Lord Carrington, who was due to become President of the European Council, it was the desire to turn Venice into something operational, a real European initiative rather than just diplomacy by resolution. For French President François Mitterrand, it was an opportunity to relieve France of the deadening hand of Venice and to reassert French influence in the region, even if it meant a tilt toward Israel to establish French credibility. The formation of the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in late 1981, as part of the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in mid-1982 demonstrated the limits of both approaches. When the dust had settled, the Europeans had participated in one great success at the cost of eliminating any pretensions to an independent initiative and one great failure at the cost of eliminating any pretensions to an independent role — singly or together.

#### *Venice, Europe, and the Reagan Administration*

The Europeans began 1981 still full of rhetorical resolve to pursue a common initiative based on Venice. On December 2, 1980, the European Council reviewed "the action taken" since the adoption of the Venice Declaration on the Middle East. Finding the principles of Venice to incorporate the "essential elements" for comprehensive settlement, the council encouraged its president to undertake more contacts, seeking formulas for agreement on such subjects as Israeli withdrawal, Palestinian self-determination, and Jerusalem.

The newly elected Reagan administration was thus faced by European allies with well-established views on the Middle East contrary in many respects to U.S. policy. The administration itself had no pronounced view on how to proceed. The president's own strong pro-Israeli

<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon continued. See the *New York Times*, August 7, 1984, p.D1, for an account of an International Energy Agency report that estimated that the changing value of the U.S. dollar has cost Japan the equivalent of an 8 percent oil price increase in 1984; for Europe the figure was 9 percent

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expressions remained to be translated into policy. His Secretary of State, Alexander M. Haig, Jr., was not well known for his views on the Middle East, though he had dealt extensively with the Arab-Israeli conflict as Kissinger's deputy in the Nixon-era NSC, including the Jordanian crisis of 1970. Europeans were more familiar with Haig's stint as NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR); he was widely expected to support the strengthening of U.S.-European ties. Following their customary practice on Middle East issues, the European foreign ministers who saw Haig in the winter and spring of 1981 indicated that the European community was prepared to "wait" until U.S. policy developed more fully before proceeding on their own "initiative."

U.S. policy, however, hardly pleased the Europeans. Rejecting a return to a Carter-style comprehensive approach with eventual Soviet participation, Haig wanted to complete the Camp David process through the achievement of an autonomy agreement that pointedly excluded both Palestinian self-determination and the PLO. Simultaneously, he worked to finish the unfinished business of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty: Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. By the terms of the treaty, the U.S. had agreed to seek U.N. support for a multinational force to patrol Sinai or, failing that, to supply an alternative force.

In Haig's view the peace process alone could not deal with the full range of U.S. interests and problems in the Middle East. It had to be joined to another concept, the so-called strategic consensus whereby the United States and its friends in the Middle East, working bilaterally, would concert measures to deal with Soviet and Soviet-sponsored threats to regional security. Haig understood that regional conflicts more often than not overshadowed the superpower rivalry.<sup>14</sup> He believed, however, that bilateral cooperation to deal with the Soviets could not await the will-o'-the-wisp comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This approach differed fundamentally from the concepts embodied by the Venice Declaration. As noted earlier, Venice was premised on the need for a rapid resolution of the conflict — especially through self-determination for the Palestinians. Furthermore, Haig's strategic consensus was dismissed quickly in Europe as misplaced anti-Soviet zeal. There was to be no transatlantic meeting of the minds on either the approach or the substance of Middle East policy.

As for European diplomatic efforts, Haig saw Venice as an obstacle to the completion of Camp David. His conversations during his first Middle East trip in April 1981 persuaded him that the European

activity had been less than constructive. When the initiative was examined closely, it lacked any real mechanism for proceeding and any real credibility with the parties, especially the Israelis. But it did obstruct U.S. policy, if only by contributing to the illusion that persistent Arab opposition to the Camp David Accords would leave the United States isolated even from its own allies. Clearly, the Sinai withdrawal with its requirement for an international force, would be a test of America's capacity to sustain the treaty and to enlarge support for it.

Haig's objective then was to gain European support for the peace process from which, in his view, they also benefited even as they criticized it. He wanted to do so without straining the Atlantic Alliance, already in the midst of a strenuous security debate over the impending deployment of U.S. missiles and arms control. And it had to be done in a way that would not dilute Camp David in order to accommodate the advocates of Venice, lest the United States break faith with its Egyptian and Israeli partners in the peace process.

#### *Europe Joins the Sinai Multinational Force*

American policy toward the peace process — and the European role — unfolded in several stages. Washington decided to await the outcome of the June 1981 Israeli elections before undertaking a strenuous effort to complete the autonomy negotiations. After the LIKUD coalition was unexpectedly returned to power, both Sadat and Begin visited Washington in the late summer. Between their two visits, Sadat and Begin met together in Alexandria and announced the reconvening of the autonomy negotiations. Buoyed by this evidence of political resolve, Haig then decided to make a determined push for an autonomy agreement before the year was out, well ahead of the Sinai withdrawal date set for April 1982.<sup>15</sup>

In the meantime, the Israelis clearly identified U.S. participation in a Sinai multinational force as essential, and President Reagan had agreed to contribute American units. The Egyptians, for their part, had been opposed to any U.S. force lest it appear that Egypt was providing a military base to a "foreign power." After an appeal by Haig to Sadat and further exchanges with the Israelis, all parties rediscovered the original compromise implied in the peace treaty: a multinational force with U.S. participation. Now it was up to the United States to produce the others.

Haig began with the Australians but they deferred to the Europeans. Among the Europeans, the British, with Lord Carrington due to

<sup>14</sup> See Haig's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sept. 17, 1981 (U.S. Dept. of State, Current Policy, No. 312). See also Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *CAVEAT*, (New York: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 169-70.

<sup>15</sup> The reported indignation and surprise on the part of U.S. officials at the renewal of the talks (New York Times, August 28, 1981) certainly did not characterize the reaction of Haig and his immediate staff. It was precisely the signal of political resolve the U.S. needed to revive the peace process.

become the president of the EC Council in September, thought it a bad idea. The French position, under the recently elected François Mitterrand, (he won the presidency on May 10, 1981) was unclear. Mitterrand was widely known as a friend of Israel and had been strongly supported by French Jewish voters. His government's first act on the Middle East, however, had been to join the U.N. condemnation of Israel for its June 7 bombing of the French-made OSIRAK reactor in Iraq, during which one French technician was killed. Among the other Europeans consulted, the Dutch and the Italians deferred to the British and French. In that disturbed summer of 1981, (the Lebanon missile crisis occurred in May, the Osirak raid in June, the Beirut bombing in July) the result, as Haig put it, "had been a sort of hanging back from the dance floor."<sup>16</sup>

The dance quickened perceptibly in the fall of 1981. On September 23, visiting New York, Lord Carrington, newly elected president of the EC, spoke to the Foreign Policy Association. Arguing that Washington should welcome European political cooperation, Carrington portrayed the Venice Declaration as an initiative launched when Camp David was already in the doldrums. He reaffirmed the "balancing principles" of the European approach — "security for Israel and self-determination for the Palestinians" — concluding that the United States and Europe could agree on overall objectives while applying diverse methods.<sup>17</sup>

Carrington's renewed interest in a diverse "method" coincided with French policy in at least one respect — the desire somehow to go beyond Camp David. Mitterrand's policy had become clearer if not entirely coherent through a series of pronouncements and state visits: French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson's tour of the area in late August which culminated in a meeting with Arafat; the visit of Crown Prince Fahd to Paris on September 8; and Mitterrand's own trip to Saudi Arabia a fortnight later. The French had now gone beyond the Venice formulation to embrace the PLO and Palestinian statehood, as a necessary part of a lasting settlement. The socialist government was also promoting closer ties and arms sales to Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, the latter the source of 53 percent of its oil. To this end, Mitterrand had praised openly the so-called Fahd plan, announced by the Saudi Crown Prince in early August (and rejected by Israel) as a signal contribution to the search for peace.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Haig, *Caveat*, pp. 327

<sup>17</sup> See the article by Carrington, based on this address, in *International Affairs* (London) Winter 1981-82, especially p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> The "Plan" was launched in an interview with Fahd on August 7, 1981, as reported by FBIS, August 10, 1981, C4-5. Sadat, then visiting the United States, described Fahd's remarks as "nothing new" (NBC, "Meet the Press," August 9, 1981). Most Israelis rejected the Plan but some were intrigued by Fahd's willingness to speak out. Speculation focused on point seven of eight points, which stipulated that all states in the region should be able to live in peace. The Saudis refused to declare specifically that this meant Israel as well. (See, for example, Fahd interview on November 2, 1981, as quoted by FBIS, November 3, 1981, C-1 et passim.)

Overshadowed by all of this activity, however, was the other side of Mitterrand's approach to the Middle East; strengthening ties with Israel as well as with the Arabs. Not so visible, for example, was the renewal of cooperation between French and Israeli intelligence.<sup>19</sup> Before becoming president, Mitterrand had favored the Camp David Accords as a vital step forward, even if incomplete.<sup>20</sup> Cheysson had disparaged Venice publicly as early as May 1981.<sup>21</sup>

These ingredients — Haig's push for a Sinai force, the Fahd Plan, Carrington's desire to advance the Venice "initiative," and Mitterrand's "more Palestinian, more Israeli" approach — soon exploded in a bitter controversy. The catalytic event was the murder of Anwar Sadat on October 6, while reviewing a military parade. Shortly thereafter an unseemly rush began to undo the Camp David Accords. Only five days after the murder, Cheysson allowed that the way was now open to "other Arab approaches," presumably the Fahd Plan. Speaking to reporters on the way home from the funeral, former Presidents Carter and Ford emphasized the need to bring the PLO into the negotiations.<sup>22</sup> The Saudis, who had refused to attend the funeral, prepared to press the Fahd Plan.

Haig now feared the worst, possibly the unravelling of the entire peace process and a dizzying descent once again towards war. At an early September meeting in Spain, he had explained to Fahd why the U.S. opposed the prince's plan: it was a restatement of "non-negotiable" Arab positions except for a tantalizingly vague expression on the right of all states to live in peace and security; among other things, it lacked any mechanism for direct negotiations with Israel. He had reiterated the U.S. position on the PLO and neither the approach of intermediaries (the so called Mroz mission) nor the hints of Arab officials had indicated any change.<sup>23</sup> At Sadat's funeral, Haig had angry words with Carrington for opposing European participation in the Sinai Force.

Subsequently, Haig sought Mrs. Thatcher's approval directly and made a similar appeal to Mitterrand at the Yorktown Summit (October 16-19, 1981). His arguments were very basic: if Europe, after Sadat's murder, failed to participate in the MFO for Sinai, then the peace treaty might collapse; a decade of progress toward peace would come undone

<sup>19</sup> See Frederick Seager, "New Directions in French Middle East Policy," *Middle East Review*, Spring/Summer, 1982.

<sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, June 3, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> *Le Monde*, May 28, 1981.

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times* October 1981.

<sup>23</sup> See *New York Times*, February 19-20, 1984, for an account of the Mroz "mission" and Flora Lewis, "Middle East Record" *New York Times*, February 23, 1984, for an account of yet another PLO venture. Haig authorized State Dept officials to hear out Mroz but to respect stated U.S. policy on dealing with the PLO. In this instance, as in several approaches by Arab officials, Haig reiterated the U.S. stand. He was never informed of the subsequent "dialogues" alleged by these articles probably because the PLO's position itself never changed.

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and in its wake, neither the Fahd Plan nor Venice would be of any avail whatsoever. The Europeans had to support Camp David or the entire process might go down the drain. Mrs. Thatcher agreed; so did Mitterrand. Thus armed, Haig set about securing the approval of the Netherlands and Italy.

Translating such agreement into the MFO, however, proved a treacherous task. On October 29, Haig was astounded to hear President Reagan praising the Fahd Plan in the wake of the Senate vote in support of the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia. On November 2, Fahd thanked the president and spoke openly of the plan as a substitute for Camp David. But in the meantime, Reagan, apprised of the impressions that might be afloat, took the occasion of King Hussein's visit to Washington to *reaffirm* Camp David.<sup>24</sup> Privately, the United States informed the Saudis of its continued opposition to the Fahd Plan.

The most incendiary act fell to Carrington. His state visit to Saudi Arabia was marked by lavish praise for the Fahd Plan and criticism of Camp David for its failure to deal with Palestinian self-determination.<sup>25</sup> This provoked Haig to a public diplomatic protest and a private, widely reported suggestion to Carrington that he "cool it."<sup>26</sup>

With the PLO split over its implications, the Saudis as early as November 10 had to admit that the plan lacked support, especially in Washington.<sup>27</sup> The subsequent Arab summit at Fez on November 26 was suspended rather than risk humiliating Prince Fahd. With the Fahd Plan not even enjoying unanimous Arab approval, the alternative to Camp David once again fell into the limbo of the ethereal — the European initiative.

All attention was therefore focused on the meaning of European participation in an MFO for Sinai. On November 23, the EC foreign ministers approved the intentions, announced that day, of the British, French, Dutch, and Italian governments to participate in the force. But their statement declared that the multinational force in Sinai met the "wish" of the community to facilitate "progress" towards a comprehensive peace that included "the need for the Palestinian people to exercise fully its right to self-determination." Predictably, this crude attempt to link the MFO somehow with Venice outraged the Israelis, who promptly

<sup>24</sup> See the *Washington Post* November 3, 1981.

<sup>25</sup> Carrington's comments had been preceded by utterances by the British Ambassadors to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, both of whom pronounced Camp David dead. See *New York Times*, November 10, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Subsequently, the *Washington Post* reported Haig as having told a staff meeting in mid-December that his British counterpart was a "duplicious bastard." See the *Washington Post*, February 19, 1982.

<sup>27</sup> See Foreign Minister Saud's statement after the meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council as quoted by IBIS, November 12, 1981, p. c.3.

rejected European participation on such a basis. Haig demanded a clarification from the Europeans and also asked Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzchak Shamir to come to Washington. On the twenty-sixth, the four European participants declared in writing that the role of the MFO was defined only in the Egyptian-Israeli agreements and "that they have attached no political conditions, linked to Venice or otherwise, to their participation." Thus equipped, Haig convinced Shamir to ignore the European rhetoric. One of his more persuasive arguments was Arab reaction to prospective European participation; with Egypt's exception, they interpreted it to mean support for Camp David at the expense of the European "initiative." On December 3, the United States and Israel issued a lengthy statement: it cited the European declaration of the twenty-sixth, reiterated that the treaty of peace and the Camp David Accords were the basis of the MFO, and renewed U.S. and Israeli commitment to the peace process — especially the autonomy talks.<sup>28</sup>

Now it was the turn of the Europeans to be upset. Prime Minister Menachem Begin continued to complain about statements by Carrington and others which, in his view, diluted the MFO commitment. The EC partners, their own amour propre offended in the engagement, responded with a bureaucratic tour de force. On January 13, 1982, three sets of statements were issued: the original EC document *linking* the MFO to Venice; a reiteration of the November 26 statement by the four participants, *disavowing any linkage*; and parliamentary statements in each of the four countries explaining the decision to participate, some with reference to Venice, some not. (Not surprisingly, Carrington's speech roused Begin to a denunciation of British policy.) Only in late January of 1982, on his second trip that month to the Middle East, did Haig finally persuade the Israelis not to bother further with Carrington.

The European initiative — embryonic at best — had been aborted. Confronted by the choice of supporting Camp David and the United States versus the unknown of what was at best a resolution rather than a diplomatic mechanism, the Europeans had chosen to go with Washington. Even without the murder of Sadat, if pressed they probably would have done so, simply because most Europeans had never envisioned their own efforts as a substitute but at best a complement: Europe would function as a go-between for the U.S. and the oil producers rather than a go-between for the Arabs and the Israelis. The ideal circumstances for this kind of maneuver existed in 1979-1980 when the U.S. administration, uncomfortable with the limitations of its own handiwork at Camp David, did not mind European pressure on behalf of the PLO so long as

<sup>28</sup> For this and other EC statements, see Garlinkle, *Western Europe's Diplomacy and the United States*, Appendixes I, J.

it did not get out of hand. When it did, at Venice, it was too late. It had fallen to the Reagan administration and its reputedly pro-European Secretary of State to disallow Europe the luxury of benefiting from the peace treaty while pretending to offer an alternative.

The Sinai MFO experience had revealed more than just the limitations of a European proto-policy. The French had already broken with the Venice approach because, after ten years, it no longer served as a vehicle to assert French influence in the Middle East. Mitterrand's ambitions also required a credibility, especially with Israel, that Venice had made impossible. He climaxed this part of his policy with an unprecedented visit to Israel on March 2, 1982. The French president was well received by his hosts, who appreciated his decision to relieve Israel's diplomatic isolation. Mitterrand's forceful plea for Palestinian self-determination fell on less enthusiastic ears.<sup>29</sup>

*Europe and the Beirut Multinational Force*

On April 25, 1982, precisely as laid down in the peace treaty, Israeli troops left Sinai, turning over the peninsula to a regime of carefully delineated security zones. A multinational force, with European participation, was in place to supervise the details. Unfortunately for the proponents of Camp David, however, the successful evacuation of Sinai, the end of the Fahd Plan, and the demise of the Venice initiative did not lead to a revival of the peace process. The agenda was dominated increasingly by the probability of war between Israel and the PLO in Lebanon, a war that might easily involve the Syrians and even possibly the superpowers.

Since the summer of 1981, the United States had been working unsuccessfully to relieve the sources of tension in Lebanon, including a strengthening of the UNIFIL mandate in the south. These efforts had been frustrated by the U.N. Security Council's preference for dealing with the zone dominated by Israel's local surrogate, Major Haddad, rather than the PLO. Saudi pressures on Syria and the PLO proved to be weak and episodic. The Syrian missiles deployed in the Beka'a valley, which had occasioned a crisis in May 1981, were not moved; the inter-Arab political process stimulated by Ambassador Philip Habib to alter the Lebanese political deadlock, and with it to restrict the Syrian and PLO presence, petered out in irresolution. After a series of violent incidents, the Israelis had indicated that their patience was at an end. Haig's final efforts to promote a diplomatic alternative, including an international conference, were overtaken by events.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Seager, *New Directions*.

<sup>30</sup> Haig, *Caveat*, pp. 314-35.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982, had been preceded two days earlier by an attack on Shlomo Argov, Israel's ambassador to Great Britain, Israeli air raids on targets in and near Beirut, and a heavy PLO artillery barrage against Israel's northern towns. These developments caught the United States and its European allies in the midst of the Versailles summit. It had not been a particularly good trip for the U.S. team. Bickering amongst the president's national security adviser, the White House staff and the secretary of state had peaked. A crucial negotiation with the Europeans on the Soviet gas pipeline sanction issue had fallen through. Now the Europeans were immensely disturbed by what they regarded as Washington's failure to restrain Israel. They lost no time in condemning the Israeli action and pressuring Reagan to do likewise.

European — and other — perceptions notwithstanding, no green light had been given to the Israelis for Operation Peace Galilee.<sup>31</sup> Those who knew the Lebanon problem in 1981-82 understood clearly that if nothing changed, sooner or later Israel and the PLO would do battle. Despite U.S. efforts at the U.N. and through Ambassador Habib, nothing had changed. Haig carried on a strenuous dialogue with Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Begin and Defense Minister Sharon, urging restraint.<sup>32</sup> As he pointed out then and later, neither he nor anyone else proposed to tell Israel *not* to defend herself; he could and did stress that Israel's response must be in proportion to an internationally recognized provocation. The charge that this gave a green light for an operation that reached into Beirut was belied not only by the Israeli cabinet's action,<sup>33</sup> which authorized much less of an expedition, but was also based on the misconception that Israel was incapable of independent behavior. In the 1956 Suez War, the 1967 Six Day War, the latter days of the October 1973 war, and in 1978 (the Israeli advance to the Litani River in Lebanon), the Israelis had shown their capacity to press rapid military actions to the limit before international pressure could be mobilized against them. The Lebanon war fit this pattern.

<sup>31</sup> See Zeev Schiff, "Green Light, Lebanon," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1983, and Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984). The book is far less sharply drawn than the article; the chapter devoted to the U.S.-Israeli relationship, for example, is entitled "The Illusion of Collusion," rather than "The Green Light." Schiff's original charge was apparently attuned to Israeli domestic politics. In the war's aftermath, various "moderate elements" in both the Likud government and the Labour party opposition tried to excuse their initial support of Begin's policy by pointing to Washington's failure to condemn Israel. See Schiff, p. 83. The "green light" thesis remains a convenient rather than an accurate idea.

<sup>32</sup> Sharon described U.S. officials as "absolutely, totally against" the war and corroborated Haig's own account on the issue of provocation. See his interview with Oriana Fallaci in the *Washington Post*, August 29, 1982, especially p. A19. See also Haig, *Caveat*, p. 335.

<sup>33</sup> See *Maariv* Special Supplement, "The War Without An End," June 3, 1983, (Hebrew).

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Precisely because the United States could not tell an ally simply to take losses without retaliation, U.S. officials were of divided mind about Israel's attack. At first, the United States adopted an understanding position, based largely on Israel's self-proclaimed goal of a forty-kilometer advance. Later, the mood soured abruptly, when the dramatic events of the fourth day of the war made clear that the Israeli operation would go much further. A week after the invasion had begun, the Syrian air defenses in Lebanon had been demolished, the Syrian air force had lost eighty jets to none for Israel and Syrian ground armor had suffered serious defeat. Beirut was cut off and the PLO trapped.

U.S. policy, as preached by Secretary Haig, was to take advantage of these events to rid Lebanon of *all* foreign forces, to establish a working central government in Beirut, and to make new arrangements to protect the Israel-Lebanon frontier. Once this had been secured or at least was well under way, the United States could resume its efforts to advance the peace process: the defeat of the PLO and the Syrians, combined with the Iraq-Iran war had devastated the most powerful Arab opposition to the Camp David Accords. It had also removed a basic Israeli objection to a more broadly defined autonomous regime for the West Bank and Gaza — fear that the PLO might gain control. Standing immediately in the way of this far-reaching concept were the 12,000 PLO fighters (and a small number of Syrian troops) in Beirut, surrounded by Israeli forces.

Frightened by the Israeli advance, abandoned by all its allies, including the USSR, the PLO seemed ready to leave Beirut without demanding more than a safe-conduct from the newly constituted Lebanese Committee of National Salvation. But attitudes were changing rapidly in Washington. Newly ascendant was the view that the Israelis, if they were not to be punished for the invasion itself, must not be permitted to capture Beirut for both political and humanitarian reasons. This gave rise to a host of mixed signals about U.S. direction and intent.<sup>14</sup> A different U.S. policy, perhaps opposed to Israel, seemed imminent. The result was to blunt at a critical moment the very instrument with which Haig had hoped to pry out the PLO: the *fear* of an Israeli assault.<sup>15</sup> The PLO decided instead to play for time.

Oddly enough, the Israelis themselves seem to have had neither the intention nor the desire to enter West Beirut. It had not been part of even the most ambitious version of Sharon's plan, on the grounds of both political complexity and the cost in Israeli casualties. Instead, the Phalange forces were supposed to deal with the PLO. When the Christians

failed to act, the Israelis were caught in a conundrum, unwilling to assault West Beirut head-on but equally unwilling to let the PLO remain intact. Psychological warfare and occasional heavy cannonades could not disguise entirely Israel's indecision.<sup>16</sup>

The frustration of Haig's policy in Lebanon concluded the increasingly mutual disaffection between the secretary of state and the Reagan administration. On June 25, 1982, Haig resigned. Surprisingly, he was asked to stay on to manage the crisis, which he did until early July when he was relieved by George Shultz. In the meantime, the military and political pressure of the developing stalemate around Beirut had overwhelmed the fragile Lebanese consensus formed in the aftermath of the PLO and Syrian defeat. The Muslim members of the Committee of National Salvation could not sanction an assault on West Beirut; the Christians, especially the Phalange, were not about to inaugurate their renewed political ascendancy by joining the Israelis in battle. This stalemate left no effective agency with whom Washington's envoy, Philip Habib, could work to arrange a peaceful removal of the PLO. And it was this void that the Multinational Force (MNF), conceived by Washington and supported by London, Paris and Rome, was intended to fill.

Soon after returning to Washington from the Versailles summit, Haig had contacted the French, among others, about cooperation in handling the Lebanon crisis. Cheysson had made such cooperation contingent on doing something for the Palestinians. Subsequently, the French had devised a U.N. resolution in concert with the Egyptians that was intended to give the beleaguered PLO a strong political boost even at the nadir of its military fortunes. Haig saw this as another attempt to rescue Arafat for no worthwhile purpose; it also held the danger of persuading the Israelis that the capture of West Beirut might be necessary. On June 25, after several attempts to delay the resolution, which was supported by fourteen members of the Security Council, the United States vetoed it.

Despite the veto, Haig believed that the French would cooperate in the end. They had historic interests in Lebanon, and Mitterrand had been anxious to reassert French influence in the Middle East all along, independent of his European partners if necessary. The French had allied themselves with Syria's enemies, especially Iraq, and a nasty undercover war between the two secret services had taken casualties for two years already — notably the French ambassador to Lebanon, murdered in September 1981. If the MNF was to fill a void that would lead to PLO evacuation, the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty and a Syrian defeat, then Paris could hardly refuse.

<sup>14</sup> See for example the *New York Times*, June 21, 1982, and Haig, *Caveat*, pp. 343-44.

<sup>15</sup> Haig, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Maariv*, Special Supplement.

By the time Haig left office in early July, the French, along with the Italians and British, had agreed in principle to a MNF to be deployed only after Israel, Syria, the PLO and the Lebanese assented to the withdrawal of *all* foreign forces. (Syria, which claimed not to be a foreign force because of its 1977 Arab League mandate to enter Lebanon, was to be "disinvited" by the Lebanese.) In Haig's original scheme, the PLO (and Syrian) departure from Beirut was to be the first but not the final step. The MNF's function would be to ensure that this took place under peaceful circumstances. It was to be neither a buffer between Israel and the PLO nor a substitute for a Lebanese army responsive to a new Lebanese government.

Whatever the prospects for such a scheme, they dimmed rapidly after Haig's removal from operational authority on the evening of July 5. The new secretary of state, George Shultz, was known to be less enthusiastic about Haig's policy of support for Israel, and his confirmation testimony two weeks later sounded a note of solicitude for Palestinian rights.<sup>37</sup> Even earlier, on July 6, responding to rumors in Jerusalem, the president announced U.S. willingness to participate in a Multinational Force. This was a stunning surprise, which provoked an angry Soviet response. The negotiations in Beirut stalled, pending further developments.

Despite Habib's efforts, it took another six weeks, two ferocious Israeli bombardments and an inconclusive Israeli-American crisis for Arafat to conclude finally that he could not remain in Beirut. When the 2,200-strong MNF entered the city (800 French, 800 American, 400 Italians and 200 British in a logistics unit), its function was to assist in the removal of the PLO, a task supposed to take up to thirty days. The idea that all parties should commit themselves to a withdrawal *before* deployment of the MNF seemed no longer relevant to such a limited objective. When the evacuation was completed two weeks ahead of schedule, the United States abruptly removed its Marines on September 10, 1982, and the Europeans followed suit.

Four days later, Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel was murdered. The Israeli army entered West Beirut to "restore order" but on September 16-18, several hundred residents of the Sabra-Chatila refugee camps were massacred by Phalangist troops. In the midst of mounting outrage directed against Israel and its Christian allies, the United States and the Europeans responded to the government of Lebanon's request for a return of the MNF, an act approved by the European Council on September 21. (The French and Italian troops arrived on the twenty-sixth and the Marines on the twenty-ninth.) The new mission, at least as it was defined for the U.S. contingent, was "to establish an environment which

will permit the Lebanon Armed Forces to carry out their responsibilities in the Beirut area."<sup>38</sup> Their presence was to be governed by "peacetime" rules of engagement — use of force allowed in self-defense. The French role was defined by Mitterrand himself as contributing to "a return of security and the respect of the people's rights."<sup>39</sup> The Italian Prime Minister talked more expansively of re-establishing Lebanese national sovereignty and "the withdrawal of all the forces of occupation."<sup>40</sup>

#### A Wasting Asset

These dramatic events placed the Europeans, especially the French, in a sharp dilemma. They had chosen to follow a U.S. policy that they deemed to be in their interest, that would prevent an Israeli attack on Beirut, rescue the PLO, and offer a fresh opportunity for action, perhaps along the lines that the Venice Declaration had sketched out. Shultz's confirmation statement had been greeted by European diplomats as a step forward. Yet the U.S. policy, as evidenced in the president's September 1 initiative, had chosen Jordan, not the PLO, as the critical Arab interlocutor. Only eight days later, the Arab Summit meeting issued the Declaration of Fez, a modified version of the Fahd proposal which emphasized anew both the PLO and Palestinian statehood, but still omitted reference to recognition of Israel or any call for direct negotiations.<sup>41</sup>

As for Lebanon itself, the U.S.-led MNF had been removed even before the political future of Lebanon had been settled. Now the Europeans were returning with the Americans to Beirut to stabilize the situation. But what was the long-term purpose of the Force? And what was the European policy it could serve?

There were no answers to these questions except to say that the MNF underwrote for the moment the U.S. diplomatic effort to remove all foreign forces, to train a Lebanese army and through these actions, to support what was presumed to be a unified Lebanese government under the presidency of Amin Gemayel, Bashir's brother.

<sup>37</sup> Report of the Department of Defense Commission on the Terrorist Act at Beirut International Airport, (December 20, 1983) Part I, The Military Mission.

<sup>38</sup> Mitterrand's statement of September 20, 1982, reported by FBIS, September 21, 1982, VII, K1.

<sup>39</sup> As quoted by FBIS, September 22, 1982, VII, L1.

<sup>40</sup> See the *Washington Post*, September 10, 1983, for an account of the Fez Summit which was the scene of some complex exchanges. Notably, in addition to the "unified" position of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the summit supported Iraq against Iran over Syrian objections. Syria, for its part, was relieved of any pressure for a specific timetable of withdrawal from Lebanon despite the Lebanese government's request to be free of the "Arab Deterrent Force." (This title was the last remnant of the Arab League compromise of 1976-77, which justified the presence of Syrian forces in Lebanon. Token Kuwaiti and Saudi contingents were also deployed in the country. By 1981, they had been withdrawn after their governments quarreled with Syria.)

<sup>37</sup> *The New York Times*, July 14, 1982.

On the broader political issues, the Europeans endorsed all approaches — Venice, Fez and the Reagan Plan. The U.S. proposals were hailed as the most realistic, though clearly disappointing because of Washington's pointed rejection of the PLO and the Palestinian state.<sup>42</sup> The Europeans soon learned that the PLO had a crucial role to play even in the U.S. plan; the king of Jordan was not expected by Washington to join a negotiation without PLO sanction. The British, among others, cautioned Hussein not to trust too much in U.S. assurances until the Israelis had delivered some concessions — such as a settlement freeze. It is not clear what effect such views had on the king, who did not need European advice to be cautious. (In fact, Washington did not insist that Hussein actually sit down with Israel before a settlement freeze, only that he indicate his willingness to do so once that condition was met.)<sup>43</sup> But the advice was surely consistent with the still prevalent European conviction on the need to do business with the PLO. Perhaps most characteristic was Italian Foreign Minister Colombo's hope that a merger of the Fez declaration with the Reagan Plan "would pave the way to that global solution we have been advocating for a long time as the only way to a joint and lasting settlement of the controversy."<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately for their political objectives, the French, the Italians, the British — the French in particular — had chosen the Palestinian horse in Lebanon at the moment it was being expelled from the barn. Despite periodic efforts to revive the vetoed Franco-Egyptian resolution, or to advocate a synthesis of Venice, Fez, and Reagan, none of these efforts had much of an effect. Once Jordan refused the Reagan initiative in April 1983, the only game left was Lebanon. For Europe to "play" in Lebanon meant participating in the MNF. And to participate in the MNF meant to play more or less by U.S. rules.

The trouble with the U.S. rules was that they became increasingly irrelevant to the situation on the ground. A fuller account of the Lebanese tragedy would be out of place here. Suffice to say that the Europeans made little impact on the main elements of the drama: the Soviet rearmament of the Syrians; the U.S.-Israel-Lebanon negotiations leading to the stillborn accords of May 1983; the Israeli withdrawal from the Chouf; President Gemayel's inability to divide and rule his opponents among the Druse, the Shiites, and the Christians.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the French and German reactions as quoted by FBIS, September 3, 1982, pp. 11, K1.

<sup>43</sup> See interview of Secretary of State George Shultz in the *Washington Post*, April 24, 1983. "What the President said (to King Hussein) was 'if you enter the negotiation, say you are ready to enter the negotiation, I will not press you to actually sit down at the bargaining table unless we can find some form of freeze.'"

<sup>44</sup> May 8, 1983, as quoted by FBIS, VII, May 16, 1983.

At the end of September 1983, when American warships bombarded the hills overlooking Beirut in support of the Lebanese Army, the confusion about the MNF's role was laid bare. The Europeans regarded U.S. intervention as a folly, taking sides in a civil war, yet they had no answer to deal with either Syrian-supported military pressure or their own vulnerability to attack. The French had enlarged their forces but they were not to be used offensively. Victims for two years past of Syrian terror tactics, they too were victimized on the bloody Sunday of October 23 — when fifty-eight of their troops were killed just moments after two hundred forty-one American Marines died in the explosion at their airport headquarters.

Brought to the moment of truth, the Europeans wavered. The British and Italians, whose contingents had not been attacked, wished to leave but neither government wanted to be guilty of either "pulling the plug" or succumbing to fear of terrorism. In Paris, the French government was torn by indecision. The larger dictates of an independent role in the Middle East, especially the alliance with Iraq, required a harsh response. But the reason for being in Lebanon — the Palestinian issue — had all but disappeared, at least from Lebanon. Were the French prepared to take the offensive for the sake of the Gemayel government, to return to the abandoned policy of upholding a Christian Lebanon with French lives? The answer was no. After weeks of paralyzing discussion, the French Air Force raided Baalbek in search of the Iranians who were presumed to be the perpetrators of the October bombings. By all accounts except the official one, the raid was a failure.

The month of December was marked by increasing allied tension as the United States, through Secretary Shultz, strove to keep the MNF together. In the European view, increasing U.S. military activity in behalf of the Gemayel government entailed large and unpredictable political risks. They argued for a face-saving political solution which would recognize the preponderance of Syrian influence, even at the cost of repudiating the Israel-Lebanon Accords, in exchange for a Lebanese government that could give the MNF an honorable exit. But the Geneva Conference in December 1983 only postponed these issues and abruptly, the Americans, who seemed to be leaning toward a political solution, turned once more in a different direction. When Gemayel visited Washington later that month, he was told that the Accords were not for sale. The newly consecrated strategic alliance with Israel, and Washington's own role in arranging the Accords, ruled out such a volte-face. The president, brandishing the success of the Grenada intervention (which occurred the same day as the Marine disaster), sought reinforcement

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against congressional critics through popular indignation over terrorism and rhetorical resolve to stay the course.

*Diplomatic Dénouement*

Sixty days into 1984, it was all over. In Washington, an already shaken congressional support for the Marine presence disintegrated after the Long Commission Report of December 20, 1983, pointed out the ambiguities of the president's policy in the course of investigating the destruction of the Marine compound. The MNF had become a combat force in a combat zone but without a combat mission. Lacking such a mission, it could prove its value only by taking casualties. This was not a test that could be passed for long; it made no sense. The alternatives were to reduce the political objectives of American policy in Lebanon or to increase the military force necessary to achieve them. The United States would do neither; the Europeans alone could do neither. The original U.S. objectives were unattainable; the original European objectives had departed with the PLO. Lebanon was no longer a place for the French to put pressure on Syria or for the Europeans to leverage the Americans to adopt a fresh approach to the PLO.

Instead, the Europeans, led by the French, attempted to fashion a position that recognized the new facts of life on the ground, preserved a European "role," yet did not break with Washington. The next American surprise — the abrupt announcement of the "redeployment" of the Marines on February 7, even as the Lebanese army was disintegrating under attack — found Paris, in particular, attempting yet another diplomatic maneuver. This took the form of an ambitious approach to the USSR, appealing in part to wider European sentiment about Washington's mis-handling of relations with the Kremlin.

The French, British, and Italians agreed that American emphasis on Soviet mischief in the Lebanon situation was both unwise and overdrawn. In part, this was due to a much deeper cleavage between European and American policies, deriving from the view that détente had worked in Europe and should be extended elsewhere, in contrast to what many Europeans saw as an American return to the cold war, extended to Europe through the controversies over missile deployments and sale of high-technology to Moscow. Thus, a European policy toward the Middle East which had set itself a distinctive role to play in strictly regional terms became briefly an attempt to distance itself from the general U.S. policy toward the USSR.

The trouble with this on both regional and international levels was elementary and devastating. The Syrians were not interested in ne-

gotiating with the Europeans because they did not believe the European tail could wag the American dog, even in Lebanon itself. To go above the Syrians in the hope that Moscow would pressure Damascus, endorsed Washington's view of a significant Soviet role in the trouble. But what was the incentive for the Soviets to cooperate with European plans?

For three weeks after the American "redeployment," the French strove vainly at the U.N. to construct a resolution justifying the presence of French troops. They could not deliver the Americans to a resolution that spoke of a broader forum on the peace process with Soviet participation. They could not persuade the Soviets to do with less. Once apprised that the Europeans would not break with Washington to deal with Moscow, the Soviets lost interest. On February 29, 1984, the Soviet Union vetoed the French-sponsored resolution on a U.N. force in Beirut.

On March 24, the French Defense Ministry announced that French troops would leave Beirut by March 31. A hasty and futile negotiation to prevent an additional battle over their positions, especially on the "green line" dividing the city, then ensued. On the thirty-first, only a few French gendarmes armed with pistols remained of the MNF. As if to remind the world once more of the connection, the final days of the French withdrawal were punctuated by the announcement in Washington on March 30 that American naval forces would be withdrawn, their presence "no longer a necessary or appropriate means of achieving these (U.S.) goals."<sup>45</sup> An Arab diplomat likened the American statement to the announcement that a man had died a month after his funeral. As the French left, shelling broke out anew between rival militias.

**The Future of European Policy in the Middle East**

The European experience over the last several years in the Middle East testifies conclusively to the illusions fostered by the search for a common policy, and the realities that revealed Europe's ability to act in the shadow of American policy but not independently of it. It was an illusion to believe that Europe could mediate between the United States and the oil producers, because Europe could not persuade the United States to do what it did not wish to do in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and because in the end, the Europeans would not risk lasting injury to the transatlantic connection despite oil dependency. It was an illusion to believe that Europe as a whole or a state such as France could mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict, because neither Europe as a whole nor France itself was prepared to lavish the money and the military power to make of itself a major player. Like the United States in Lebanon, the Europeans,

<sup>45</sup> *New York Times*, March 31, 1984, p. 1.

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through their resolutions, offered excessive rhetoric supported by overwhelming force. Sinai and Beirut punctured such pretensions.

The picture of European policy that emerges from these two instances is paradoxical. The successful European force, that of Sinai, represented a sharp break with the "common," "independent," "unified" policy as it had developed over a decade. The unsuccessful Beirut exercise was also a break, representing as it did an action that followed Washington's lead. The attempt to use it as a lever to influence the United States or to create an independent stance collided with the reality that no one who counted really believed the Europeans could act decisively without Washington. Even in Lebanon where one major European state — France — had historic interests and influence, the Europeans were manifestly dependent on Washington both in the beginning and at the end.

In retrospect, it seems clear that changing conditions — in the region, in the oil markets, and in Europe itself — had also undermined the basis of a common policy. The Egyptian-Israeli peace of 1979 had been resisted after the fall of the Shah upset the oil markets. Within two years, however, the oil producers' own leverage had fallen victim to a decade of conservation, economic distress that lowered demand, and the successful development of alternative sources of supply. Meanwhile, European leaders were beset by critical issues that monopolized the agenda: economic problems, the Euromissile deployment, reform of the Common Market itself. Finally, the Mitterrand government in France determined to play its own hand in the Middle East.

The oft-frustrated search for an independent, united European role in the Middle East, however, should not be allowed to overshadow otherwise flourishing bilateral and multilateral relationships. The Europeans remain traders, purveyors of arms and suppliers of diplomatic advice. As members of NATO, they help to anchor the southern flank, including Turkey, vital to the enduring security of Western interests in the area. Acting with the United States, they can provide a crucial capability. Acting without the United States, they can make much less of a constructive difference, though, as events have shown, they can make a good deal of trouble for themselves and for others. And it must be said that sometimes, even the Atlantic partners working together cannot succeed.

That raises a more significant issue: the ability of the United States and select European partners to deal with crises that affect their security in regions beyond Nato's formal boundaries. While this issue has been debated at length, almost unseen by the debaters, American and European statesmen have managed by trial and error to work together. Notwithstanding the ghost of the Suez debacle of 1956 and the more recent querulous exchanges over Middle East policy, both the Sinai MFO

and the Beirut MNF testified to the existence of the *will* to cooperate. But will alone is not enough.

In this sense, the Beirut experience remains profoundly disheartening not because the United States and its European allies failed to cooperate, but because they failed to succeed. The Sinai force was crucial to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in which the essential local compromises had been reached with American help; the United States appealed to its allies with a clear conception of what had to be done and the consequences for failing to do it. In Beirut the local compromises were absent; American policy emerged as confused; and very powerful allied navies and highly trained though not numerous ground forces failed to produce local compromises. As these words are written, the Atlantic allies face another regional crisis — in the Persian Gulf — where the stakes are high, the local compromises are lacking, and where the chronicle of successful Western peacekeeping ceases abruptly with the British withdrawal over a decade ago.

For the eighties, then, the issue is no longer whether the United States and its allies can work together to meet challenges beyond NATO's formal structure. They can. But can they succeed? Cooperation is a precondition of success but is not sufficient unto itself. The ambiguities of Beirut are far more likely to be the case than the certainties of Sinai.<sup>46</sup> It is for Western statesmen to make sure that the illusions of the past do not cloud their vision of how to deal with the realities of the future.

<sup>46</sup> In August of 1984, when British, French, and Italian warships joined the U.S. navy in searching for mines in the Red Sea, believed to be laid by pro-Iranian forces (perhaps Libya), the French and Italians stressed the bilateral nature of the exercise. A French diplomat was quoted as saying, "We still have quite a bad memory of what happened in the multinational force in Lebanon." (See the *Washington Post*, August 29, 1984.)