DISKUSSIONSPAPIERE

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European-Arab Development Cooperation and the Middle East Peace Process

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Introduction

Jordan is heading the frontline of a political process of historical dimensions which may hopefully lead to a "just, lasting and comprehensive peace"1 and a sustainable economic and technical cooperation in the area, and Jordan may reap a substantial part of the "peace dividend". We are aware that a number of vital issues are still subject to further negotiations. In Article 6 of the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel "the partners recognize that their water resources are not sufficient to meet their needs"2, and hence "the necessity to find a practical, just and agreed solution"3. The second essential is "economic development and prosperity as pillars of peace, security, and harmonious relations"4. "The parties will enter into negotiations with a view to concluding agreements on economic cooperation, including trade and the establishment of a free trade area, investment, banking, industrial cooperation, and labor"5.

The peace process has been engineered on the highest strategic and diplomatic level. As U.S. Ambassador Richard W. Murphy put it: "Washington's role, both bilateral and multilateral, in the peace process continues to be critical"6. "A comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace is not just around the corner. There is a long hard road ahead"7. Europe has offered a helping hand in keeping various aspects of the negotiation process going - I may refer to Norway's role in preparing the ground for the Gaza-Jericho Agreement. But on the whole, the role of the European Union (EU) has been a limited one. The future involvement of the EU can be expected in the fields of development assistance, preferential trade agreements and private investment rather than in strategic issues.

¹ Preamble of the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel. Jerusalem Post, October 26, 1994.

² Art. 6,3.

³ Art. 6,2.

⁴ Art. 7,1. ⁵ Art. 7, 2b.

⁶ Richard W. Murphy, "New Hope in the Middle East?" Digest of Middle East Studies (DOMES), vol. 3, no. 2 (1994), p. 21. ⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

European development cooperation has three major aspects: Firstly, official development assistance (ODA) by the European Commission and EU member states, secondly, preferential trade policy, and thirdly, non-governmental cooperation in the fields of private investment, trade, and various other forms of cooperation including R&D. As a supranational body, the EU is reaching out for counterparts aiming at similar forms of supranational cooperation. In fact, the Middle East peace process has opened up a new perspective of intra-regional cooperation. Its potential core regions are Jordan, Palestine, and Israel which may arrive at some sort of Economic Federation or Confederation8 in a longer perspective. Egypt has explicitly been addressed already in Article XVI of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement together with Jordan "to participate in establishing further liaison and cooperation arrangements between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian representatives"9. Syria and Lebanon may hopefully join a closer intra-regional cooperation in due time.

Perspectives for Palestine

As to Palestine, substantial flows of official development assistance and private capital will be invested in housing, transport and communications, electricity, and all fields of social infrastructure which have been neglected under the Israeli occupation. 10 These reconstruction activities mean jobs and income for many people both in Palestine and in the neighboring countries. The World Bank has estimated investment needs in the Palestinian public sector at US\$ 1.35 billion till 1998, and additional US\$ 1.6 billion for the period 1999-2003, with major sectors being power, transport, water, education, health, agricultural supply services, and natural resources management 11.

11World Bank, Developing the Occupied Territories, An Investment

in Peace, Vol. I, Washington, D.C. 1993, p. 24.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Gaza-Jericho Agreement, Art. XVI, 1.

¹⁰Cf. UNCTAD, Construction and Housing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Geneva 1994, pp. 45 f. UNCTAD, Health Conditions and Services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Geneva 1994, pp. 52 f. UNCTAD, Public Utilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Geneva 1994, pp. 70 f.

In addition, substantial investments into directly productive activities of the private sector will be needed.

It is obvious that Palestine will not have the option of setting up an inward-looking economy adhering to a protective infant industry approach with substantial tariff and non-tariff barriers as in larger countries like Egypt in the past. A small economy has no other chance than being outward-looking and export-oriented. This also implies opportunities for neighboring countries and its traders, industrialists, and professional services. Palestine's future prospects and essential assets are

- its high quality human resource base, entrepreneureal talent and professional skills,
- the financial resources of the expatriate Palestinian community in the Arab World and elsewhere,
- its unique cultural heritage and potential for tourism, and
- the non-existence of a heavy foreign debt burden, a bloated bureaucracy and a loss-making public sector.

The above-mentioned public works proposed by the World Bank for the medium-term should directly generate about 70,000 men-years of employment in construction alone¹². Both official technical assistance and private professional services will be required. Substantial know-how can be mobilized within the area itself. The technical assistance needed for detailed project feasibility studies, training, and institutional development in the short term (till 1998) are estimated at US\$ 35 million. A further US\$ 50 million of technical assistance will be needed over the medium term 1999-2003¹³. This will create a large market for a wide range of engineering and management services open to Palestine's neighbors.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

The EU is the largest single donor to Palestine. It made total grants worth US\$ 1.1 billion since 1987 in development assistance and support to Palestinean refugees and released another US\$ 450 million by the end of 1994. In November 1994 the EU signed an agreement with Palestine for aid and loans worth US\$ 124 million for 1995 as part of a European aid package of a US\$ 620 million five year assistance program of grants and loans from the European Investment Bank. Among activities supported by the EU are paying salaries of the 10,800 Palestinian policemen; a US\$ 50 million project to build 1,200 housing units; construction of a 230 bed hospital; upgrading of the sewage and solid waste systems, and funding Palestinian universities and colleges. In addition, a number of individual EU member states including Germany are supporting Palestine's reconstruction with substantial funds. The impact on the demand of goods and services from neighboring countries may be substantial if workable cooperation procedures can be established between Jordan, Palestine, and Israel.

The Size Constraint

The outward-looking option mentioned for Palestine also seems to be a promising strategy for an eventual economic federation including Jordan and Israel, since geographical size constitutes a major structural constraint for any of the three individual states as well as for an eventual Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli economic federation as a whole. This size constraint is shared by some other 110 countries with less than 6 million inhabitants. It has been highlighted in renowned book titles: "Small is Beautiful" (Schumacher 1977), "Small is Possible" (McRobie 1981), "Small is Beautiful but Vulnerable" (Commonwealth Secretary-General 1984), or "Small is Dangerous" (Harden 1985)¹⁴. Smallness induces comparative disadvantages in all productive sectors where economies of agglomeration and economies of scale matter. A small resource base narrows down the scope for diver-

¹⁴Cf. Guido Ashoff, Entwicklungs- und industriestrategische Optionen kleiner Länder der Dritten Welt, German Development Institute, Berlin 1988.

sification of an economy. Dependence on foreign markets both with regard to inputs and outputs means higher instability.

Many small countries in Europe, the Middle and the Far East in the past and in the present have successfully applied an outward-looking strategy: Denmark and Ireland, Cyprus and Malta, Hong Kong and Singapore. Conventional five-year-planning in the style of the 1950s and 1960s was given up relatively early in favour of flexible, adaptive niche strategies benefitting from rapidly changing opportunities in international markets. This strategy requires 15

- an efficient and reliable institutional and regulatory set-up allowing for adaptive, flexible policy-making,
- a workable incentive system for the business sector,
- a suitable organizational framework to aquire international technology,
- a broad educational base with emphasis on technology-oriented curricula, and
- an efficient R&D structure closely linked both with the local enterprises and the international scientific community.

Four areas seem to deserve particular attention:

- agro-industrial activities,
- construction-related industrial activities,
- mechanical and electrical engineering activities, and
- sophisticated service activities (banking, insurance, computer software, marketing, all sorts of professional services), all closely linked with the particular skill level and the technological potential available in the region.

Controlling the Economics of Agglomeration

The European Union has committed itself to support the peace process on the economic flank. It must be avoided that political winners eventually may turn into economic losers. According to all international experience, economic development is subject to

¹⁵Dieter Weiss, "Palestinian Industrial Development - A
 Conceptual Perspective", Orient, no. 2 (1990), pp. 311-317.

the self-supporting economics of agglomeration. In this process core regions with the highest economic and technological potential tend to grow at the expense of the weaker regions which risk to be marginalized. This tendency is well-known both theoretically and empirically. Urban agglomerations all over the world tend to grow at the expense of their hinterland and to attract talented people and resources. This process of circular causation of newly emerging opportunities, growing purchase power, differentiating market niches, and increasing profits is self-supporting.

Therefore, deliberate regional counter-strategies must be designed and implemented if we want to avoid that certain regions in certain countries grow at a much faster pace and partly at the expense of others. Hence, we are faced with the task of supporting regional policies in order to maintain equal opportunities for the three main players in the peace process with actual per capita incomes ranging from US\$ 13,230 for Israel to US\$ 1,120 for Jordan¹⁶, and some US\$ 1,715¹⁷ or less¹⁸ for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A major role of the European Union could consist in supporting a regional policy in favour of the weaker partners of the Palestinean-Jordan-Israeli Triangle. All the more so as one cannot expect a consensus among the three countries on a distribution of income from the richer to the poorer partner states. This is difficult enough in a single-nation state such as Italy where deliberate policies for its south, the Mezziogiorno, have been devised - although with disappointing results. The situation is more complicated if one deals with a group of several nation states with different income levels. The citizens of the richest member country will hardly be willing to make substantial sacrifices in favour of the less affluent partners. This problem is

¹⁶World Bank, World Bank Atlas 1994, Washington D.C. 1994 (both for 1992).

¹⁷World Bank, Developing the Occupied Territories, op. cit., p. viii.

¹⁸UNCTAD, Prospects for Sustained Development of the Palestinian Economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1990-2010, Geneva 1994, p. 17, estimates US\$ 1,452 for the West Bank and US\$ 806 for Gaza Strip (1990 figures).

well known within the European Union with its less developed member countries like Portugal or Greece, and a number of new low-income applicants from Eastern Europe. Particular political decision-making routines have been established to maintain such distributional policies within the EU channeled through the European Regional Fund, the European Social Fund, and the European Investment Bank.

The three major participants in the Middle East peace process seem to be far from mobilizing a similar political and administrative effort. Therefore, it may become a major challenge to the international donor community and particularly to the EU to support countervailing mechanisms to balance to the natural agglomeration tendencies which would work by and large in favour of the strongest partner, i.e. Israel. Thus, former State Secretary in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs held that the difference in per capita income would mean "a vertical integration based on inequality and dominance, Israel's GNP being 20 times the GNP of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The attempt to integrate these different development levels would create a Bantustan in front of Israel, a kind of ghetto anything else than a concept of peace", and it would "rigidify the structures of dependence which have emerged in 27 years of Israeli rule". 19

Trade

A natural outlet for the small outward-looking economies involved in the Middle East peace process are the markets of the Middle East, from processed foodstuffs to fashionable clothing, from well-designed furniture to printing and publishing, from chemical and pharmaceutical products to construction material with a high value-added content such as pre-fabricated mechanical and electrical appliances, from various machine tools such as agricultural machinery and water pumps to do-it-yourself handicraft utensils etc. In addition, European markets should be

¹⁹Shlomo Avineri, Nachbarschaft durch den Zaun (Neighborship through the Fence), in: Der Tagesspiegel, 28 March 1995.

explored. Even the highly protected European Agrarian Market is accessible during winter periods when the southernmost European agricultural producers do not offer supplies for climatic reasons.

The market niches must be identified on the enterprise level product by product, not on the macro-economic planning level looking at broadly defined comparative advantages sector by sector. Entrepreneurial niche strategies must be supplemented by governmental support strategies for technology acquisition and international marketing aiming at the creation of a country image.

Another field of action is preferential trade. Special Cooperation Agreements have been concluded between the EU, Jordan and Israel since the 1970s offering preferential access to EU markets for certain products in addition to development assistance within the framework of the EU Financial Protocols. Particular quotas have been negotiated between the European Commission and the Occupied Territories. Beginning in 1989 the first exports were shipped directly to the EU from the Occupied Territories instead of passing through Israel or Jordan.²⁰

Meanwhile, preferential access should be given to the region as a whole, thus stimulating the process of intra-regional cooperation among the three countries - be it steps toward a free trade zone or a customs union, preferably with mechanisms to maintain fair market chances for the weaker partners. Elements of a free trade zone - the weaker form of trade cooperation - have been established in the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. The Palestinian and Israeli side have agreed to "attempt to maintain the normality of movement of labour between them"²¹. "There will be free movement of agricultural produce, free of customs and import taxes between the two sides"²², and "there

²⁰UNCTAD, Main Features of Domestic and External Merchandise Trade of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Geneva 1994, pp. 30 f.
²¹Art. VII of the Attached Protocol on Economic Relations Between the Government of the State of Israel and the P.L.O., Representing the Palestinian People, signed on April 9, 1994 in Paris.

²²Ibid., Art. VIII.

will be free movement of industrial goods free of any restrictions including customs and import taxes between the two sides²³.

A free trade zone could also be set up between Jordan and Palestine as a preferable first step which keeps other options open. On the other hand, a customs union with Israel would have to deal with the high level of Israeli import duties for many industrial products, e.g. keeping out inexpensive industrial supplies from countries like South Korea.

Technology

Economic growth will be led by exports. This requires competitive goods and services in terms of quality, price and aftersales service according to best-practice technology. Hence, a crucial factor in future development will be the extension of the technological base in all available forms, starting with a solid R&D competence of one's own. A technological home base is essential for creating a workable acquisition structure able to

- identify available international technologies relevant for one's own production upgrading,
- to take notice of promising new trends in international R&D,
- to shift one's productive base toward new goods and services,
- to adapt foreign technologies to one's own production processes and most important of all
- to build R&D potential in one's own enterprises, research institutes and universities.

This requires a far-sighted technology policy as typically implemented in a number of Newly Industrializing Countries of the Far East. Its major ingrediants are

- sufficient funding,
- attractive working conditions for talented people,
- vivid international research communication, and
- a general climate which stimulates individual creativity and freedom of thought.

²³Ibid., Art. IX.

Funding alone is not enough. Human creativity can neither be bought by petro-dollars, nor can it be given turn-key style, e.g. by foreign aid, as can be seen in many resource-rich and resource-poor countries alike. Most of the success stories of international development efforts during the last three decades can be studied in countries with poor natural resources but with determined emphasis on human capital development and technology at large: Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and others as opposed to the majority of the OPEC countries or African countries with rich mineral resources like Nigeria, Zaire or Zambia.

Competing for Funds and Attention

For various reasons the EU is particularly interested to deal with regional groupings rather than with individual countries. Respective negotiations are on the way between the EU and Morocco and other members of the new Maghreb Union. On the other hand, one should not over-estimate the economic and political concern, awareness, and decision-making capacity that can be mobilized within the EU in favor of such supporting policies for the countries involved in the Middle East peace process, as the EU is largely absorbed by many internal problems and the new challenges of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union - not to speak of the Balkans. Therefore, the EU contribution in terms of aid and trade concessions will be less than what one would consider to be necessary and adequate.

A major contribution might be expected from the European private sector. However, this requires the establishment of a political and economic framework which is suitable to attract European foreign investment in substantial dimensions - being aware of competing attractive investment opportunities which have opened up in countries like the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, in addition to old competitors in the Mediterranean like Cyprus, Malta, Tunisia, Greece or Turkey, and in South East Asia. Foreign private capital is extremely sensitive to the political and economic investment climate. It remains to be seen

how this macroeconomic framework will develop in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. The impact of declamatory exercises like the Casablanca conference in 1994 will be limited. More important would be moves in favor of taking up the idea of an Arab Common Market open to products of potential foreign private investments in Jordan or Palestine, since the individual Arab markets are too small.

Toward a European Economic Security Umbrella

More substantial efforts will be needed than are visible so far. It will not be easy to arrive at a close and constructive cooperation after long and bitter fighting - in a way comparable to what happened in the European unification process after centuries of military confrontation. There too it took time to bury painful memories in favor of a constructive larger option. In some European countries after the war this new pattern of cooperation met substantial suspicion which could only be overcome by a United States military and economic guarantee. The United States made sure for all participants that the overall situation was kept under control. The Marshall Plan set the signal that post-war European economic reconstruction and unification would not turn out to be a zero-sum game of benefits for a few at the expense of other losers. In a way, the reconciliation of postwar Europe initially meant an enforced peace which later turned into one of the most beneficial cooperative processes in recent history.

What does this mean for the Middle East peace process? As far as the military security aspect is concerned, the EU - contrary to the United States - will be extremely reluctant to get involved. But it is within the scope of the EU and part of its vital self-interest to help in establishing an economic security umbrella, comparable to a Marshall Plan in the magnitude of some ECU two billion per annum for about one decade to make it clear again that in this hopefully emerging closer cooperation there will be no losers but only winners.

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