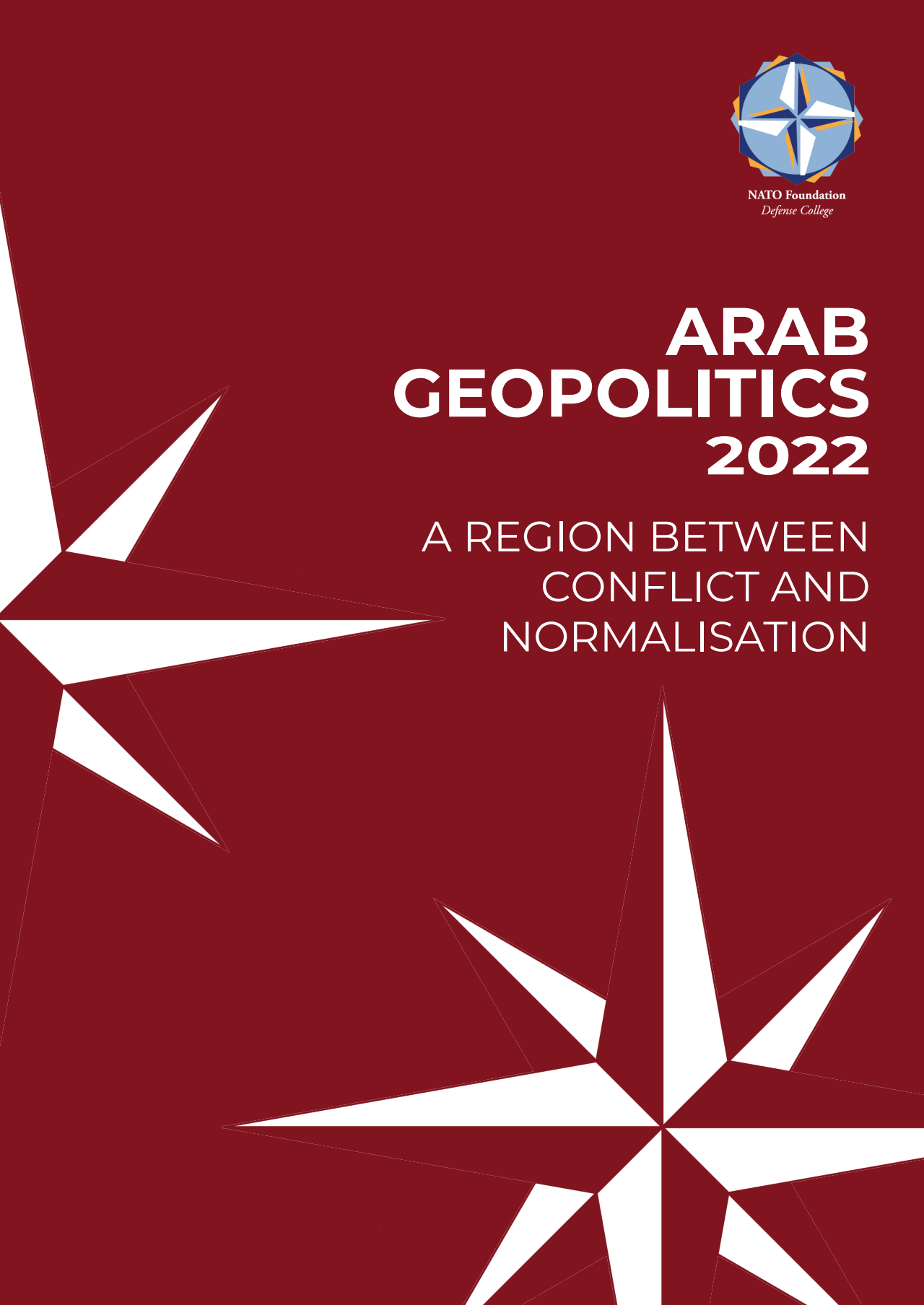
NATO Foundation
Defense College
ARAB GEOPOLITICS 2022
A REGION BETWEEN CONFLICT AND NORMALISATION

ARAB GEOPOLITICS 2022

A REGION BETWEEN CONFLICT AND NORMALISATION

High-Level Conference organised by
the NATO Defense College Foundation

in co-operation with
the NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division,
Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo
and the NATO Defense College

Special thanks to
Philip Morris International

Arab Geopolitics 2022. A region between conflict and normalisation
Copyright © 2023
NATO Defense College Foundation

Edito da Ledizioni srl
Via A. Boselli 10, 20136 Milano (MI)
tel +39 0245071824
www.ledizioni.it
info@ledizioni.it

ISBN: 978-88-5526-954-4
Finito di stampare nel mese di giugno 2023 da BD Print, The Factory srl - Roma

Realizzazione editoriale e progetto grafico: Ledizioni srl
Copertina: Windrose mit Haupthimmelsrichtungen via Wikimedia Commons

Gruppo di Lavoro
Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo
Alessandro Politi (editor)
Sofia Mastrostefano
Alice Bugli
Domitilla Franceschi

NATO Defense College Foundation
Via Alessandro Serpieri, 8
Roma 00197
web: www.natofoundation.org
email: info@natofoundation.org
twitter: @NATOFoundation
facebook: NATO College Foundation
linkedin: NATO Defense College Foundation
instragram: @natofoundation
youtube: NATO Foundation

Tutti i diritti sono riservati a NATO Defense College Foundation. Nessuna parte di questo libro può essere riprodotta o utilizzata in alcun modo, escluso le citazioni giornalistiche, senza l'autorizzazione scritta di NATO Defense College Foundation, né per mezzi elettronici né meccanici, incluse fotocopie, registrazione o riproduzione attraverso qualsiasi sistema di elaborazione dati.

NATO Defense College Foundation

The NDCF is a unique think-tank: international by design and based in Rome, due to its association with the NATO Defense College. Its added value lies in the objectives stated by its charter and in its international network, which make the Foundation a body with considerable freedom of action, transnational reach and cultural openness. The charter specifies that the NDCF works with the Member States of the Atlantic Alliance, its partners and the countries that have some form of co-operation with NATO. Through the Foundation the involvement of USA and Canada is more fluid than in other settings. The Foundation was born twelve years ago and is rapidly expanding its highly specific and customer-tailored activities, achieving an increasingly higher profile, also through activities dedicated to decision makers and their staffs. Currently, the Foundation is active in three areas: high-level events, strategic trends research and specialised decision makers' training and education.

ODED ERAN

Senior Research Fellow,
Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv



MAKING BETTER REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH NATO AND THE EU

I would like to start by mentioning the fact that Mahmoud Karem and Ahmad Masa'deh, were ambassadors in Brussels along with Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo and me: the four of us were involved in the initiative creating the Middle East Mediterranean Dialogue within NATO which is still a very important tool nowadays. I have a somewhat bleak picture of the Middle East, including of its future.

We are now in the early stages of a bipolar world where economic competition becomes very fierce between the United States and its allies on one side and China and its allies on the other side and this may affect all of us, including in the region. We are also witnessing the strengthening of fundamentalist forces in the Middle East, including in my own country, which may affect the next government (we are going to elections on the 1st of November 2022) and we can also see the declining of the so-called "western powers" in the region. You can call it whatever you want, there is no doubt that the United States is shifting its interest to the Far East, to the Pacific, and this also combines with the relative weakening of Europe, the strengthening of China's position in the Middle East and all of this is not necessarily a welcome situation.

Looking at the economic situation in the region I checked the recently issued report[1] by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on the Middle East. They focused on a growth of less than 3% for next year, but I doubt about it, and they foresee inflation rising to 15% in some of the countries, the rise of food prices, the rise of energy prices for the consumers which is very good for the

[1] https://www.ebrd.com/news/2022/ebrd-eib-and-world-bank-launch-new-report-on-menas-economy-.html.

oil producers. But most of the region is a consumer not producer and I think that what we have seen in the recent three years is probably the new normal: that is, a combination of pandemics (one kind or another), we can see the impact of external wars, not in the region but outside the region, on food prices and on food security, above all we can see the coming problem of the transition from fossil energy to renewables. If you think that the region is ready, this is not the case: we are far from being ready; even with the modest plan, we are far away.

Moreover, there are serious existential problems with water supply to many parts of the region: Jordan is an example; this is already a crisis which is going to be even more serious than it is today, if no solution is found in the immediate future.

All this is relevant to our discussion today: there is a lot of hype about gas, about the dependency of Europe because not enough is done regionally in this context and the EU should do more than it does, there is a lot of hype about other organisations. I am not so sure whether armies in the region will fight together side by side; certainly against an external threat, and I believe that NATO should concentrate on the civilian side of the military. If a crisis happens tomorrow morning (and it could be the case), the armies will be key even to a passive solution, because they are the only organised tool of all regimes, including in Israel.

So rather than concentrate on the military aspects of cooperation (of course intelligence and all similar aspects are very important and have not to be cancelled), I would put more emphasis on the civilian side of what military organisations and security organisations can do in terms of meeting the challenges of the problem in front of them.

Ambassador **Oded Eran** is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, and served as Director of INSS from July 2008 to November 2011, following a long career in Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government positions. Before joining INSS, he served as Secretary General of the Israel branch of the World Jewish Congress. From 2002 to 2007, he was Israel's Ambassador to the European Union, covering NATO as well. Prior to that, Dr Eran was also Ambassador to Jordan, and Head of Israel's negotiations team with the Palestinians. Among his previous positions: Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chief of the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC. Between 2007 and 2013, Ambassador Eran served as an advisor to the Knesset sub-committee on Foreign Affairs. He holds a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics.