

THINK-TANK TASK FORCE 5

EUROPE AND THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ANALYSIS

- ◆ This paper approaches EU's relationship with the Near and Middle East by identifying various interrelated regional crises; principles which would guide a common foreign and security policy alongside hard questions which still need to be addressed; and initiatives that can be undertaken, or supported by, Europe in the medium and long term.
- ◆ The following three arcs of crisis which are identified so as to clarify the inter-related nature of the region's problems:
 - the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
 - democracy movement and civil rights;
 - increasing tension between Sunnis and Shiites.
- ◆ The advocacy for an integrated European approach to the Near and Middle East is generally accompanied by an appeal for a 'common European will'. There are some principles on which it is possible to find convergence.
 - European foreign policy should be guided by support for the rule of law in international affairs and in matters concerning State sovereignty.
 - The EU's respect for the value of human life is to be demonstrated, among other ways, by the effort taken to minimise civilian casualties when European military intervention in other States is deemed necessary.
 - As soon as possible, European military forces should responsibly disengage from the region.
 - 'Responsible disengagement' means: first, disengaging only when the military security of the people whom European forces are protecting is met; second, transforming the short-term engagement in military security into a long-term participation in economic and ecological security.
- ◆ There are certain questions which are intrinsically controversial. Their nature makes it tempting to sidestep them; yet, they need explicit, extensive discussion. For example:

- Should activists for a liberal democracy be supported, in any way, even when their campaign is directed against a regime that is an important regional ally of the EU?
- Should Islamist parties, whose electoral programme is committed to democracy, be engaged in dialogue?

PROPOSALS

- ◆ Medium term (until 2010): political, economic and ecological security:
 - **Iran:** its inclusion in future discussions on Palestine, Iraq and the Gulf waters should be seriously considered.
 - **Israeli-Palestinian conflict:** explore the possibility of changing the negotiation method. It is not just the military security of both sides that needs to be addressed, but also ecological and economic insecurity (for example, hydro-politics).
 - **Lebanon:** It is in the Lebanon that, uniquely, the three arcs of crisis coincide. This coincidence makes it very important for Europe urgently to engage the country so as not to leave the stage for other regional actors to exercise a more baleful influence. In the light of the Lebanon's vulnerability to being used as a pawn in regional conflicts, an enforced neutral status for it should be considered.
 - **Jordan and Egypt:** three proposals are offered for consideration:
 - Positive conditionality: EU agreements negotiated with southern Mediterranean States should be based on rewards for progress made on mutually agreed reforms - not on sanctions for failing breaking agreements.
 - A 'Bill of Rights' approach in pressing for respect for human and civil rights for all minorities and women.
 - The proposal by President Jacques Chirac for a charter for dialogue between cultures and civilisations that could be a preparatory step towards creating a Mediterranean Charter for Human Rights
- ◆ Long term (after 2010): the need for a European vision for the Near and Middle East:
 - **Shared governance:** joint participation in networks of regional management, especially for the sea's resources.
 - **Economic reform:**
 - Europe needs to decide when it would be prepared to countenance free movement of workers between the Near and Middle East and the EU.
 - The liberalisation of trade in agricultural goods. The issue is currently subject to WTO talks, but the EU may need to decide to be more generous towards the Mediterranean region.

- How should Europe think about the long-term future of the region in terms of both its production and consumption of natural resources like water, oil and solar energy? What kinds of networks of knowledge and governance would such production and consumption require?
- Long-term economic reform needs to envisage cooperation in knowledge-based enterprises. To enable the mobility of researchers and joint research and innovation, the facilitation of multilateral scientific collaboration is essential. The creation of a research permit which would be valid for the entire region should be considered.
- **Cultural Dialogue:**
 - Add a European dimension to the cultural diplomacy currently conducted by several EU Member States.
 - An extension of the Erasmus Programme to the Near and Middle East should be considered.
 - An EU broadcasting network aimed at the region should be considered. Since this would be an expensive and complex venture, it would probably be wise to begin with a pilot project based on existing proposals, such as that currently being urged by the Permanent Conference of Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (COPEAM).