

New CER working paper

## **The EU and the Middle East: a call for action**

By Steven Everts

The EU urgently needs a more effective and coherent Middle East strategy. With war looming against Iraq and violence escalating between Israelis and Palestinians, the EU is under intense pressure to spell out what it can do to solve these problems. But so far the EU has been mostly a bystander.

In this working paper Steven Everts analyses EU policies on Iraq, Israel-Palestine and the problem of poor governance in the region. He argues that the EU should become more pro-active and assertive. Rather than react with shock and horror to the latest twist in the Washington debate, the Europeans should set out their own vision. At present, the EU is often unwilling to annoy or confront anyone – be they corrupt members of the Palestinian Authority, Israeli hard-liners or authoritarian leaders of ‘failing states’. Instead the EU must learn to take a principled stand – and risk being criticised for it. Concretely, the EU should take the following steps:

### **On Iraq:**

- ★ Only back a war with an explicit UN mandate. Those EU countries on the Security Council should only give a mandate if there is clear evidence that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction.
- ★ Develop a coherent plan for the political future of Iraq. Current contingency planning is too focused on the humanitarian consequences of a possible war. Without their own plans, the Europeans will finance – yet again – American designs for a post-Saddam Iraq.

### **On Israel-Palestine:**

- ★ Use the Quartet (US, EU, Russia and the UN) to push for comprehensive settlement. After the publication of the Quartet’s ‘roadmap’, the EU should organise a peace conference in April 2003.
- ★ Spell out what the EU will offer to both parties after a settlement: a closer partnership with Israel and more assistance for the Palestinians.
- ★ Prepare, with the US, plans for a NATO-led peacekeeping force to police a final settlement.

### **On tackling poor governance in the Arab world:**

- ★ Spend more money on promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law.
- ★ Make EU aid more targeted and conditional. The EU should learn to link trade privileges and financial assistance to clear progress in recipient countries on promoting political and economic reforms.

### Note for editors

1. Javier Solana will launch this CER working paper at a seminar on January 29th 2003. For copies of the paper, please contact Kate Meakins at [kate@cer.org.uk](mailto:kate@cer.org.uk).

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