



PRESS RELEASE
November 16th 2005

New CER working paper

CAN EU DIPLOMACY STOP IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME?

By Mark Leonard

When Iran restarted its nuclear programme in August 2005, the country took one further step towards building a nuclear bomb. Fears about a nuclear Iran mounted in October, when the country's new president announced that he wanted to see Israel "wiped off the map". These two developments appear to undermine the EU's argument that its approach towards Iran – based on incentives and sanctions – is more effective than the US one, which relies on isolation and the implicit threat of military force. However, in this new CER working paper, Mark Leonard argues that EU diplomacy is still the only way to stop Iran's nuclear programme.

The EU's goal must be to slow down Tehran's nuclear programme until there is a new regime in Tehran that is more willing to make concessions on its nuclear programme, in return for western aid and trade. In the short term, the EU should:

- ★ Explicitly rule out the use of force. The threat of military intervention only serves to bring other developing countries on to Iran's side.
- ★ Resist US pressure to refer Iran to the UN Security Council, which would be a diplomatic dead-end.
- ★ Explore the prospect of establishing a 'contact group' on Iran, modeled on the 'quartet' in the Middle East peace process.
- ★ Entice Iran back to the negotiating table by suggesting that it should suspend its enrichment programme for ten years rather than permanently.

In the medium to long term, the EU should encourage the establishment of a more open and transparent regime in Tehran. To achieve this, EU governments must speak out more vocally against violations of human rights and the electoral process in Iran. The EU should do more to support the work of NGOs that seek to help civil society in Iran. And the EU should promote the creation of a regional security forum for the Gulf, which would give Iran a role in enhancing Iraq's security and force it to talk to Saudi Arabia.

Notes for editors:

1. Mark Leonard is director of foreign policy at the Centre for European Reform. He can be contacted on +44 20 7233 1199.
2. This working paper can be ordered from the CER website (www.cer.org.uk) or by contacting Kate Meakins at kate@cer.org.uk or on + 44 20 7233 1199.

ENDS