

THIRD INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE ON
CONSTRUCTING PEACE, DECONSTRUCTING TERROR

**Restructuring Relations between
the Western and Islamic Countries**
European Parliament, Brussels, 26-27 November 2006

Co-hosted by
**Strategic Foresight Group and the Alliance of Liberals and
Democrats for Europe**

Endorsed by the League of Arab States
In cooperation with Friedrich Naumann Stiftung

**(With research support from
the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

Strategic Foresight Group and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the European Parliament convened the Third International Roundtable on Constructing Peace, Deconstructing terror held at the European Parliament, Brussels, on 26-27 November 2006. The Roundtable was endorsed by the League of Arab States. It engaged important public institutions from the Western and Islamic worlds. The Friedrich Naumann Stiftung of Germany extended its cooperation. The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided support for the research that went into the preparation for the Roundtable. Strategic Foresight Group also appreciates intensive cooperation personally extended by H.E Dr Amre Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League and HRH Prince Turki al Faisal, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the success of the Roundtable.

About 40 leaders from Europe, Asia and the Middle East participated in the Roundtable. They included serving cabinet ministers, former ministers, leaders of parliamentary groups, special envoys of the heads of multilateral organisations and directors of important institutions. The distinguished group recommended an Inclusive Semi Permanent Conference on Peace in the Middle East, Western Islamic Dialogue and Engagement Initiative, International Historical Study Group on Common Human Civilisation, Arab Islamic Renaissance Initiative and the promotion of the Compact of Dialogue-Democracy-Development. The Roundtable welcomed the Report of the High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations of the United Nations.

Background

Since 9/11, terrorism, extremism and the apparent conflict between the Western and Islamic countries have dominated global policy discourse. Frequent acts of terror in the name of religion, nationalism and ideology have undermined global security and economy. While specific groups have used terror and extremism to drive a wedge between the Western and Islamic countries, acts of terror also continue to undermine human security in other countries such as Uganda, Colombia and Sri Lanka, just to name a few. In 2006, the deficit of trust between the Western and Islamic countries expanded beyond the US led war on terror and its criticism in many parts of the world.

The controversies over cartoons, the Pope's remarks on Islam, plots unearthed in Canada and the UK, and the war between Israel and Hezbollah demonstrated the fragility of global security. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian government has reached an acute crisis. The war in Iraq has destabilized the entire region and inflicted heavy human costs on the Iraqi people, as well as the coalition forces.

The current counter terrorism strategy pursued by a group of nations has evidently failed to curb support for extremism. If the relations between the Western and Islamic countries continue to slide, the world will incur heavy opportunity costs and risks. It is necessary to emphasize that terrorism and extremism are the problems of humanity and not of the Islamic world alone, and must be dealt with as such. At the same time, it is urgently required to explore a new partnership between Western and Islamic countries to bring about global transformation.

On this background, several inter-faith and academic exchanges have been launched. However, there is a clear deficit of political processes. Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) has precisely filled this vacuum by holding three International Roundtables on Constructing Peace, Deconstructing Terror.

Project History

Strategic Foresight Group had organized the First International Roundtable on Constructing Peace, Deconstructing Terror at New Delhi in June 2004. It brought together leading strategic thinkers from the United States, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, resulting in a declaration that proposed a distinction between terrorism and acts of terror and dissociation of religion from terror. SFG organized the Second International Roundtable in collaboration with ALDE group in the European Parliament, attracting the participation of senior leaders and government representatives from Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Canada. The Second Roundtable recommended a policy of zero tolerance of terror and transformation strategies for dissuading young people from supporting terror and extremism. It also recommended a political process resulting in a Heads of Government Summit.

Since the Second International Roundtable, SFG has engaged in a series of consultations with key leaders and institutions from the Western and Islamic countries. For instance:

- In March 2006, the Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary General's Alliance of Civilizations invited SFG for consultations with senior executives and diplomats of the countries supporting the Secretary General's initiative;
- In May 2006, the World Economic Forum invited SFG President to chair a dialogue between the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States on freedom and development;
- In June 2006, Liberal International, an alliance of 85 political parties from all continents of the world, invited SFG to discuss the way ahead in the international community's response to terrorism at its Executive Meeting;
- In August 2006, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported a workshop organized by SFG and SMWIPM Institute of Peace Studies at Bibliotheca Alexandrina, bringing together experts on extremism from most parts of the world to provide comparative analysis and policy recommendations on deconstructing terror. The main observations and recommendations from the Alexandria Workshop were reflected in the draft policy paper circulated at the Third International Roundtable.
- In September 2006, the ALDE Leader addressed the Plenary of the European Parliament with proposals for long term approaches for restructuring relations between Europe and the Middle East.
- In November 2006, the Liberal International World Congress at Marrakech, Morocco, which works closely with ALDE, discussed global terrorism, and the concept of an inclusive semi-permanent process to address the issues of peace and security in the Middle East.

In addition to these activities, SFG held consultations with several governments and multilateral organizations around the world in the last two years. These include Canada, United States, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, European Union, Egypt, Turkey, Oman, Qatar, Indonesia, Malaysia, League of Arab States, Islamic Development Bank and United Nations Secretariat, among others. SFG also consulted many serving and former Heads of Governments in this process.

Third International Roundtable

The Third International Roundtable held at the European Parliament began on November 26, 2006 with a reception and dinner, followed by deliberations over the whole of the next day, i.e November 27.

Mr Graham Watson, Leader of the ALDE Group, **Dr Wolfgang Gerhardt**, President of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung and **Mr Sundeep Waslekar**, President of SFG opened the inaugural session with welcome addresses. **Mr Siim Kallas**, First Vice President of the European Commission, welcomed the participants on behalf of Europe and emphasised the importance of good governance in his special keynote address.

Dr Wolfgang Gerhardt most aptly summarised the objectives of the Roundtable in his welcome address. "When Strategic Foresight Group initiated this process with the First International Roundtable on Constructing Peace, Deconstructing Terror at New Delhi in 2004, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung very promptly decided to support it. Since 9/11 there have been many dialogues and exchanges between scholars, religious leaders and civil society institutions but there has been deficit of political efforts. The problems we face are essentially political and we need political response. Therefore we welcome the initiative taken by SFG to engage political stakeholders. We welcome that ALDE, a political group in the European Parliament, is providing co-leadership to this process.

Terrorism is an old phenomenon but it has acquired global attention since 9/11. In terms of statistics, terrorism may cause less number of deaths than poverty, genocide, or even car accidents. But terrorism is an assault on core human values of liberty, justice, trust and tolerance. Both acts of terror and counterterrorism measures can undermine human dignity and human rights. They threaten trust that is necessary for trade, travel, communication and all forms of human interaction that are essential for progress of the humanity. It is necessary to deconstruct terror to protect core human values.

Our meetings are not just about dialogues. They are about finding politically feasible solutions to the problems facing us. It is important that these solutions reflect core human values and not compromises based on political expediency. Strategic Foresight Group has a track record in exploring value-based working solutions to the problems of society. This is their intention here. It is also our intention at the FNSt.”

Ambassador Hesham Youssef, Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, and **Mr Poul Nyrup Rasmussen**, former Prime Minister of Denmark and President of the European Socialist Parties delivered keynote addresses. Speaking on behalf of the Arab League Secretary General, **Ambassador Hesham Youssef** expressed the dissatisfaction of the Arab region with the current status quo and double standards. He appealed for a partnership between Europe and the Arab world to address critical problems in the Middle East, especially given the repercussions they would have for Europe.

In response, **Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen**, representing cross-party interest in the Roundtable in the European Parliament, argued that it was necessary for all parties to move away from the blame game and seek common approaches to global problems. He suggested that it was natural to have differences but it was important to recognise these differences and address them to find solutions acceptable to all concerned. He recommended a new version of the Marshall Plan to help poor countries in the Arab world with a view to create employment and provide an alternative future for young people. **Graham Watson**, in his address, welcomed this idea and emphasised the role of Euro-Arab cooperation to implement it.

Over November 27, 2006, the Roundtable was closed to the media and conducted on Chatham House rules. All participants attended the Roundtable in their personal capacity, where their interventions and comments did not necessarily represent the views of their respective governments. The conclusions presented below reflect the sense of house as perceived by the organisers. It is not a consensus statement.

Conclusions

Inclusive Semi-permanent Conference on Peace in the Middle East

The Roundtable emphasised the need to find an urgent, fair and sustainable solution to the Palestine problem. The issue of Palestine has both real and symbolic significance. It evokes strong emotions around the world as an indication of injustice and neglect of Arab concerns by the Western powers. It is at times used by groups committing acts of terror, who might not be otherwise constructively engaged in ameliorating the situation of the Palestinian people. Whichever way it is looked at, there is an absolute urgency to find a sustainable solution to this problem.

The Roundtable recommended an inclusive semi-permanent conference or uninterrupted long term talks that take place despite disruptions and violence in the short run. Eventually they may move in the direction of creating a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East to address not only the Palestinian conflict, but also other aspects of security and cooperation in the region.

The semi-permanent conference may begin as a forum for dialogue between states that have a stake in the peace and security of the region. An important element must be to provide a place at the table, for representatives of the Palestinian Authority (even though Palestine is not a state in the full sense of the term), as well as for small states in the region. This would be following the successful example of the rules used by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Also, following the CSCE example, it would be useful to engage at multiple levels – at the level of senior officials appointed by the states and other interested institutions- on a semi-permanent basis for talks on certain days every week or every month. For instance, cabinet ministers could meet from time to time and the heads of government meeting initially once a year. In addition, expert committees may be convened as and when required.

While the semi-permanent conference may begin with the Palestinian issue, it needs to address the question of security and cooperation of the entire region in the long run. There is not much to gain if the resolution of the Palestinian issue is followed by the unexpected surfacing of some other – yet unforeseen – issue. It is essential to find ways and means for the people of Israel and the Arab world to live in peaceful co-existence and if possible cooperation. It is also essential to ensure that the region is not destabilised by outside powers.

The Roundtable emphasised that Europe had a special role to play in advocating the concept of an Inclusive Semi Permanent Conference on Peace in the Middle East. It urged the European Union to help facilitate the resolution of issues in the Middle East on an urgent basis.

Western-Islamic Dialogue and Engagement (WIDE) Initiative

While the Inclusive Semi Permanent Conference on the Middle East Peace can address regional issues, it is necessary to have a mechanism to address wider security and cooperation issues between the Western and Islamic countries. The Roundtable proposed the establishment of a Contact Group of respected leaders from the Western and Islamic countries to deliberate over an agreed period of time, ideas for institutional cooperation between Western and Islamic countries and to communicate a common understanding reached through such discussion to the international community for support and implementation. Such a group may consider some of the following ideas:

The Contact Group will explore the concept of Inclusive Semi Permanent Conference on the Peace in the Middle East with relevant parties.

The Contact Group will engage with the administration, the legislative branch and opinion leaders in the United States. The Roundtable underlined the importance of dialogue with the American leadership and particularly the need to convey perspectives of the Arab leaders to their American counterparts. The Contact Group

will also engage with leaders of Iran, Syria and other key political actors in the Middle East with whom the United States has either a weak or difficult leadership.

The Contact Group will explore common ground on critical conceptual issues. It is particularly necessary to develop a common global ethic. While the world economy is integrating, the fabric of core human values is eroding. Such a disjunction between economy and human values is not sustainable. There are instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that can provide the basis for the beginning of such a dialogue. Other conceptual issues that the Contact Group could take up would include the rule of law, terminology and political Islamist movements.

The Roundtable recommended large scale student exchanges between Western and Islamic countries. Even in days of the internet, it is necessary to encourage personal interface. It should also be possible to use technology in an imaginative way to promote cultural co-existence engaging students and youth of various disparate regions of the world. While educational exchanges have been proposed earlier, they have faced barriers such as Visas for students from Islamic countries intending to study in Europe and North America. The Contact Group can use its political capital to lower such entry barriers. The Roundtable also recommended very strongly the establishment of centres of Arab culture and language at universities in Europe.

The Roundtable also recommended media cooperation between Western and Islamic countries and other countries facing the threat of terrorism and extremism to promote understanding and co-existence. The media can play a vital role in building trust. It is important to bear in mind that the media is merely a tool. It can be used in a constructive way, if those concerned about creating a better world facilitate the production of movies, television programmes, and internet blogs that build a vibrant dialogue between cultures and societies. The Contact Group may interact with major actors in the media to explore concrete co-operation.

The WIDE Initiative Contact Group may seek input from experts as and when needed. They may also consult government leaders informally to examine the feasibility of specific ideas of institutional cooperation. In addition to the Contact Group, it would be necessary to have a group of stakeholder countries and institutions.

International Historical Study Group on Common Human Civilisation

The Roundtable welcomed the idea of a study group on Islamic and European Renaissance to explore the mutual dependence and interface between Western and Islamic civilizations. It is generally believed that much of modern Western thought has its origins in Greek philosophy. In the Roman period, many important Greek works were destroyed. It was largely to the credit of the Islamic rulers of 9th to 12th century that some of these works were recovered, translated and analysed. The Arab, Persian and Jewish scholars of the time built upon the knowledge they had gathered. They further created their own ideas and innovations. The experience of the Cordoba period is particularly relevant in this context. In a historical twist, their works were destroyed in the Middle East, but Western universities secured some of them and developed them further. It is a subject for critical and independent enquiry how much of the European Renaissance and technological development was inspired by the achievements of the Islamic scholars.

At a time when the world is focussing on differences and discord, it is necessary to set up a historical study group, with respected historians from the Arab, Persian,

Jewish, European and even Asian and American traditions to explore jointly the development of human thought and the advancement of human civilization in the last 2000 years.

An independent study group will re-examine some of the critical historical issues from the perspective of examining inter-dependence and mutual cooperation in the development of humanity. The outcome of such a body should be publicised through various channels, in particular, popular media.

Arab Islamic Renaissance (AIR) Initiative

The Roundtable discussed the concept of an Arab Islamic Renaissance Initiative to provide an alternative vision of society to the Arab world. Discussion on this subject was partially conducted in the full house and mostly in informal small break-out groups. The main conclusions were the following:

The initiative should be essentially an internal Arab endeavour, with Strategic Foresight Group playing a facilitating role.

The initiative should primarily aim to build a scientific temperament, human resource capacity, employment for youth, and a new and modern outlook in the Arab societies.

The initiative should explore specific ideas such as modern Houses of Wisdom, large scale translation of scientific books and literature into Arabic, establishment of institutes of technology and social development, and others. These ideas would be developed by the Expert Group.

The initiative should primarily utilise the current capacity and existing institutions in the region and examine how it could be expanded to cover the entire Middle East. In this context, various programmes of Islamic Development Bank and Qatar Foundation were mentioned as examples.

The initiative deserves to be promoted on its own merit to provide an alternative vision for societies in the Arab and Islamic world.

It was decided to set up an Expert Group to develop the full and operational concept.

Compact of Three Ds

The Roundtable emphasised the importance of a Compact of Three Ds: democracy, development and dialogue. These were presented in the draft policy paper. The participants discussed the comparative significance of the three elements of the compact and concluded that all three were required on a simultaneous basis in all parts of the world.

The Roundtable also emphasised the need to have internal dialogue and education within societies to understand their respective cultures.

Alliance of Civilizations

The Roundtable welcomed The Report of the High Level Group issued by the Alliance of Civilisations of the United Nations Secretary General in November 2006. The participants recommended cooperation with the Alliance of Civilisations once it establishes a follow-up mechanism and other similar initiatives.

Intellectual Output

The Roundtable commended the draft policy paper especially prepared for the event and the report of the Alexandria workshop of experts. Strategic Foresight Group will incorporate important observations from the policy paper, as well as insight from the Roundtable discussion, in its key intellectual output from the Roundtable titled as ***An Inclusive World: In Which the West, Islam and the Rest Have a Stake.***

List of Participants

Co-Hosts

1. Graham Watson (UK), MEP, Leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the European Parliament
2. Sundeep Waslekar (India), President, Strategic Foresight Group

Key Supporters and Keynote Addresses

3. Dr. Wolfgang Gerhardt (Germany), President of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and former Leader of the Free Democratic Party
4. Amb Hesham Youssef (Egypt), Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the League of Arab States
5. Siim Kallas (Estonia), First Vice President of the European Commission
6. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (Denmark), MEP, former Prime Minister of Denmark and President of the European Socialist Parties

Co-Chairs

7. The Rt. Hon Lord John Alderdice (UK), President of Liberal International and former Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly
8. Dr. Abdullah Hussain Al-Kubaisi (Qatar), Director of the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Missned, Consort of the Emir of Qatar
9. Emma Bonino, (Italy), Minister for International Trade and Europe Affairs
10. Yasar Yakis (Turkey), MP, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey

Participants

11. Amb Hussain Bin Ali Bin Abdullatif (Oman), Senior Ambassador and Representative of the Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs
12. Prof. Assia Bensaleh Alaoui (Morocco), Ambassador at Large
13. Amb Hamad Al Amer (Bahrain), Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council
14. Dr. Majed Al-Kassabi (Saudi Arabia), Director General of Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Foundation
15. Dr. Haifa Al Kaylani (UK), Chairperson of Arab International Women's Forum

16. Sheikh Aflah Hamed Al Rawahy (Oman), Deputy Chairman of the State Council
17. Khaled Al-Seif (Saudi Arabia), Chairman of El-Seif Group of Saudi Arabia
18. Shukria Barakzai (Afghanistan), MP, Wolusi Jirgha, and Chief Editor of Women's Mirror
19. Prof. Laurens Jan Brinkhorst (The Netherlands), former Deputy Prime Minister
20. Harlem Désir (France), MEP, Vice Chairman of Socialist Group in the European Parliament
21. Gijs De Vries (the Netherlands), Counter-terrorism Coordinator for the European Union
22. Amb Aly Maher El Sayed (Egypt), Director, SMWIPM Institute for Peace Studies at Bibliotheca Alexandrina
23. Gareth Evans (Australia), former Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of International Crisis Group
24. John Grogan (UK), MP, Chairman, All Party BBC Committee, House of Commons
25. Amb Istvan Gyarmati (Hungary), Director of International Centre for Democratic Transitions
26. Vidar Helgesen (Norway), former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary General of IDEA
27. Dr. Shamil Idriss (United States), Deputy Director of the Alliance of Civilizations, United Nations
28. Prof. Kamel Abu Jaber (Jordan), former Minister of Foreign Affairs
29. Håkan Jonsson (Sweden), State Secretary of European Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office
30. Dr. René Klaff, (Germany) Regional Director for South Asia, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung
31. Dr. Ashraf Mohsen (Egypt), Deputy Assistant Minister for Combating Terrorism in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
32. Nikolay Paunov (Bulgaria), Counsellor to the Minister of Defence and President of Liberal Politological Institute
33. Dr. Frank-Jürgen Richter (Germany), President of Horasis: The Global Visions Community
34. Dr. Jamal Salah (Jordan), Special Envoy of President of the Islamic Development Bank

35. Petko Sertov (Bulgaria), National Security Advisor to Prime Minister
36. Par Stenback (Finland), former Foreign Minister
37. Istvan Szent-Ivanyi (Hungary), MEP, former Deputy Foreign Minister
38. Juli Minoves Triquell (Andorra), Minister of Foreign Affairs
39. Jasper Veen (the Netherlands), Secretary General of Liberal International
40. Dr. Jürgen Wickert (Germany), Director International Political Dialogue, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung

Representatives of the Host Organisation

41. Ilmas Futehally, Executive Director, SFG
42. Susanne Hartig, Director Programmes for International Political Dialogue, FNS
43. Devika Mistry, Research Analyst, SFG
44. Niccolo Rinaldi, Deputy Secretary General, ALDE

ORGANIZERS

ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe – www.alde.eu) is the third largest political group in the European Parliament and holds the balance of power in the centre of Europe's only directly elected institution. The group currently comprises 89 MEPs from 20 countries of the Union as well as observers from Bulgaria and Romania and is led by Graham Watson, a UK Liberal Democrat.

Strategic Foresight Group (www.strategicforesight.com) is a unique think tank engaged in anticipating and influencing global future. It provides research-based scenario building exercises on the future of countries and regions and offers Managing Global Challenges workshops to enable policy makers to craft strategies in uncertain times. It has emerged as a voice of reason and pragmatism in the discourse between countries and civilizations in conflict. It has advised governments in three different parts of the world and deposed before the committees of the Indian Parliament and the UK House of Commons. Its reports have been editorially covered by *The Times of India* and quoted in the world media ranging from *International Herald Tribune* and *Financial Times* to *CNN* and *BBC World Television*, as well as a large number of newspapers and periodicals in Asia and the Middle East. It has a multi-disciplinary in-house research team, an international network of experts and alliances with major policy institutions in the world.

Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (www.fnst.org) is the foundation for liberal politics. The foundation works in some sixty countries around the world to promote the principle of freedom in human dignity in all sectors of society – in united Germany as well as together with its partners abroad. Its projects and activities focus on civic education, consultancy and political dialogue.