

Project Introduction

"Security and Co-operation in the Middle East"

The point of reference

for the project came from the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which developed at the height of the East-West confrontation and sprung from the normative need of different economic systems and cultural experiences of different political systems, to break down the antagonism between western and eastern states through the idea of mutual security, to shift from the arms race to a process of disarmament and in the long-term, to work towards an enduring peace without the use of force.

Mutual Security

is a security system for states of different cultures and living standards, which allows to achieve a maximum of security with a minimum of effort. It is based on the exclusion of confrontational behaviour, on the equality of all member states, the acceptance of all partners of dialogue and the potential of economic, ecological, social and cultural cooperation.

The CSCE, which was founded in 1976

is today the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to which all the European states, as well as USA and Canada belong. In fact, disarmament, which is the far-reaching goal of the OSCE in Europe, has only made limited progress, but the arms race has been halted for the time being. The CSCE made a pivotal contribution to the process of "Change through Rapprochement" between west and east European states and to democratisation in Eastern Europe.

The Basic Principle

that civil society can and must make an important contribution to problem solving, is relevant, as in many conflicts in the regions of the middle and near east, the states do not see their way clear to doing so. By conducting a first civil society symposium, the possibilities of a later conference between the states in the whole region will be explored and prepared.

The regional conference

for security and cooperation is thought of as a permanent civil society conference of experts, but also of NGOs from the region. They might form transnational networks according to the areas of work (for example for education, energy supply, transport network, common security) and develop autonomous (self-reliant?) regional cooperation from the bottom up.

The Participants

at the civil society conference shall initially be representatives of civil society groups from the core states of the Middle and Near East: Egypt, Israel, the future Palestinian state, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. In the preparatory process, this circle can be extended to include further states.

The only condition for participation

in the conference and the symposium is a principled preparedness for dialogue across all borders and without political preconditions. For example, no one may demand the exclusion of any other.

The Goal

of the tentative CSCME working group is to encourage with all possible means the emergence of a self-supporting civil society conference from the region. To prepare for the actual civil society conference, we will conduct workshops and two symposia with the protagonists from the region.

Deciding factors for the project:

- The multifaceted territorial and ethno-cultural conflicts in the Middle East, including the Israel-Palestine conflict, have grown so intertwined and enmeshed in the last decades, that isolated solutions for the separate conflicts seem to be very nearly impossible. In addition to the long-lasting crisis and war zones between Israel on the one hand, Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria on the other, new conflicts like the one about water and sources of energy, the nuclear conflict and the repressive domestic crisis in Iran, as

Project Concept

Civil Society CSCME – Process

"Security and Co-operation in the Middle East"

well as the deepening cleft between the Shiites and the Sunni in post-war Iraq and the still unsolved question of Kurdistan have been added.

- The combination of the interregional conflicts with the external economical and geo-strategic interests of the west and other powers transform the Middle East into a region of fragile security. The Iraq war could follow other military conflicts at any time, which could take effect beyond the region and considerably above the kown level.
- The difference of interests between the states of the Persian Gulf may, with the increasing shortage of oil reserves, come to a head and could result in new kinds of open conflicts and even wars.
- Meanwhile the demand for a nuclear free zone has been made at diverse international conferences, but unfortunately there are no signs on the part of the states in the region of a serious effort to create large-scale initiatives in this direction .

A project by

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With the support of medico international.
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Make reference to: "CSCME"

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"Security and Co-operation in the Middle East"

With the participation of relevant social non-governmental groups from the core states of the Middle East in 2009