

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF: THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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*Carnegie Europe spearheaded a review process to assess the European Union's foreign policies. Drawing on consultations with experts from around the world, this memo proposes a new strategy for turning Europe into a more effective international actor.*

- 1) Develop a long-term approach.** The EU's primary interest in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is sustainable stability. But the EU should try to avoid the "Mubarak trap" it fell into with the former Egyptian president of favoring authoritarian leaders in the short term at the cost of other, longer-term policy goals. Alongside security concerns such as terrorism, the EU needs MENA markets and energy resources and will increasingly need immigrants for its continued prosperity. The EU's influence in the Middle East and North Africa is limited. The union needs to have patience, invest in regional expertise, and develop a long-term approach. At the same time, it needs to become more capable of protecting its interests in a rapidly changing environment.
- 2) Be prepared to adapt to change.** Disorder and shifting alliances are the new normal: the combination of regional power struggles and jihadist terrorism is destabilizing the Middle East. The involvement of the United States in the region is oscillating, which may leave the EU more exposed, while some other major powers like China and India have increasingly high political stakes in the region because of their growing economic need for Middle Eastern energy resources. The EU should think harder about the implications of a U.S.-Iranian deal (or nondeal) on Tehran's nuclear program for European interests, and about the impact of other increasingly emboldened regional powers, such as the Gulf states. Overall, the EU has to get better at understanding the dynamics of change by drawing on the expertise of its delegations on the ground. The rigid programming of the EU's instruments needs to be modified to allow the union to respond faster to changing circumstances.
- 3) Emphasize political processes, not players.** The EU should not get involved in identity politics such as sectarianism or Islamism and should avoid picking winners and losers. Instead, the EU should focus

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on supporting stronger political processes and try to help develop concepts of citizenship, in part through institution building. In other words: do not back political parties, but do back parliaments. The EU should not give up on supporting democracy, but its democracy support policies may be too focused on civil society rather than on institution building.

- 4) **Bolster security-sector reform.** Since the weakness of state governance is a major issue in most countries across the region, state building will remain a challenge for many years to come. But the EU has to be realistic about what it can achieve in terms of improving security. The EU should focus its security-policy efforts on security-sector reform by helping to improve Arab security sectors through aid and training, alongside existing member-state efforts especially in Iraq, Jordan,

Lebanon, and Libya. Within that context, there is plenty of scope to reconsider how the EU can use its security and defense policies more usefully.

- 5) **Focus economic policies on investment.** MENA economies face a huge investment deficit, alongside rapid demographic growth and resource shortages in some cases. Too many MENA economies depend on a rentier model and subsidies to function, with very little economic integration across the region. To support the aim of sustainable stability, one of the EU's top economic interests in MENA should be job creation for youth, which will depend as much—if not more—on ramping up foreign direct investment as on trade pacts or aid programs.

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