

WINNING THE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



a bipartisan blueprint for postwar u.s. policy

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Cover photo of a U.S. Marine greeting an Iraqi man as others surround him prior to the distribution of a shipment of humanitarian aid in Safwan, Iraq, March 26, 2003 © AP Wide World Photos. Cover design by Alicia Gansz.

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A Bipartisan Blueprint for Postwar U.S. Policy

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preface

Seven years ago, The Washington Institute's 1996 Presidential Study Group—a bipartisan ensemble of policymakers, diplomats, scholars, and experts—reviewed the challenges facing America and its allies in the Middle East and recommended that the top priority for U.S. policy was to achieve “regime change” in Iraq. Today, the United States has embarked on a war to achieve that objective. Given the commitment of our nation's leaders and the strength of our armed forces, the outcome is certain—Saddam Husayn's tyranny will soon be consigned to history. When that happens, the Bush administration must be prepared with a strategy to “win the peace,” lest the sacrifice of war be in vain.

This Washington Institute strategy paper—*Winning the Peace in the Middle East*—is designed to provide the administration with just such a blueprint for postwar policy in the Middle East. Addressing Iraq is a central focus of this effort, but the strategy paper is not limited to Iraq issues. To be as useful as possible to the Bush administration, it also addresses the four other main items on America's Middle East policy agenda: the war

on terror, the fight against rogue regimes, the challenge of authoritarianism, and the opportunities to promote Arab-Israeli peacemaking.

This strategy document has been endorsed by a bipartisan group of Americans with long experience in national security affairs: two former senators, a former speaker of the House of Representatives, two former secretaries of state, a former secretary of defense, and a former director of central intelligence. Signatories have endorsed this report in their individual capacities, and endorsements do not necessarily reflect their institutional affiliations. Endorsements reflect support for the main lines of analysis and the key policy recommendations offered in this document and do not necessarily imply endorsement of every judgment or suggestion therein.

Winning the Peace in the Middle East was written by three members of the Institute's senior research staff—Patrick Clawson, deputy director; David Makovsky, senior fellow; and Matthew Levitt, senior fellow—and edited by Dennis Ross and Robert Satloff, director and director for policy and strategic planning, respectively. (Another member of

the senior research staff, Michael Eisenstadt, was on active military duty during much of the drafting period.) Working together, they produced a collective work that brings together the specialization of each individual and the collegiality that is the hallmark of Washington Institute undertakings. Their work was informed by the deliberations of two private conferences held at the Lansdowne Conference Center in October 2002 and January 2003, with the participation of policymakers and experts from around the Middle East, to discuss the possible regional repercussions of confrontation in the Gulf.

The drafters and signatories would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by the entire staff of The Washington Institute in organizing the Lansdowne conferences and in preparing and publishing this document.

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summary

President George W. Bush declared that Iraq would be disarmed—peacefully if possible, through force if necessary. While resort to arms was surely not the preferred option, Saddam Husayn’s determination to preserve his weapons of mass destruction (WMD) ensured that the United States and its allies would be left with no choice but to act militarily. The path to war has not been precipitous. If the United States is now to avoid the age-old fear of winning the war but losing the peace, the administration’s post-war priorities must reflect an understanding of the challenges it faces and the choices it must make.

In the aftermath of the war, the United States must balance recognition of the historic opportunity to advance U.S. interests in the Middle East with a realistic view of what is possible and what is not.

America’s first priority must be to win the peace by stabilizing Iraq and helping the Iraqi people reclaim their country after a generation of Saddam’s tyranny. An effective and vigilant security force will

be required, particularly if remnants of the old order continue resistance. Stabilizing Iraq is both possible and necessary, for the sake of that country’s long-suffering people as well as for the sake of the allied forces that will secure the country after the demise of Saddam’s regime. Only if the United States invests in helping Iraqis build a new Iraq will it have the moral

standing and political authority to promote its other objectives in the region: combating terrorism; compelling a change in the rogue behavior of

regimes that sponsor terrorism and seek WMD; championing democratization and liberalization within the region’s closed, authoritarian states; and rebuilding the possibility of peace between Arabs and Israelis. If we do not invest in helping Iraqis rebuild Iraq, then the legacy of our incomplete mission in that country will impede all our other Middle East endeavors for many years to come.

With a first-things-first approach, the U.S. policy in Iraq should plan on a sequence of stabilization,

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transition, and formation of a new government. As soon as practicable, U.S.-led forces should give way to multinational peace-maintenance forces, preferably operating within an international framework. Similarly, as soon as practicable, an interim international administration should be established to work with Iraqis—from among Iraq’s talented technocracy, its creative exile community, and its functioning regional authorities in the north—to develop new political institutions and to enable Iraqis to manage their own postwar economic reconstruction. Throughout, the goal must be to assist Iraqis in building their own country anew, with a government that will be broad-based, representative, and responsible to its citizens and the international community.

Helping Iraqis achieve this transformation in their country will take time and commitment; its success, however, can contribute greatly to positive change throughout the region.

The demise of Saddam Husayn’s regime can be an object lesson for other Middle East tyrannies that support terrorism and seek WMD. The leaders of both Syria and Iran, for example, should not miss the message that countries that pursue Saddam’s reckless, irresponsible, and defiant behavior could end up sharing his fate. Conversely, countries that verifiably end their rogue behavior will reap rewards. For Syria, the main test will be to sever irrevocably its connection with terrorist groups, both those headquartered in Damascus and those, especially Hizballah, that operate with Syrian support and assistance in Lebanon. For Iran, the main test will be to recognize that its continued pursuit of WMD, especially nuclear weapons, detracts from its security rather than enhances it. Throughout, the United States must persist, in concert with its allies, in the vital work of combating terrorist networks that operate in and from the Middle East, disrupting terrorist financing and

logistical support, and denying terrorists the political succor of those who would distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable forms of terrorism.

On the positive front, success in defeating Saddam and helping Iraqis rebuild their country offers opportunities for the United States to support the efforts of Arab and Iranian liberals to open the region’s closed, authoritarian societies. This will be the moment to assist their fight for greater freedom, not draw away from them; tactics will differ throughout the region, but this principle, to be credible, should apply

to friendly and adversarial regimes alike. Promoting democratization is not a policy born of altruism; widening the

scope of political and economic participation is ultimately the best way to help Middle Easterners define their own destiny peacefully and responsibly and thereby bolster the stability of America’s friends and strengthen long-term U.S. relations with the peoples of the region. It is also an indispensable part of the battle for hearts and minds in the war on terror.

Finally, America’s postwar agenda must address the issue of Arab-Israeli peacemaking. After all, Arab leaders will surely come to President Bush and proclaim that he has proved himself in war, now he must, for their sake and the sake of America’s standing in the region, prove himself in peace.

While Arab-Israeli peace is an enduring American interest, here too the administration’s approach must be clear-eyed and realistic. One lesson from the past is unmistakable: No U.S. initiative can succeed in circumstances in which all sides wait for the others to act—or, as has too often been the case, for the United States to act for them. The prerequisite for any presidential effort to reenergize the peace process after Saddam’s demise must be the assumption of concrete responsibilities by Arab states, Palestinians, and Israelis that give diplomacy a strong chance to succeed. At this point, President Bush’s answer to

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Arab leaders who will press him to assume his responsibilities should be that they must first act—especially with specific steps that delegitimize the leaders, groups, and states that remain committed to using terror.

As the United States continues to support Israel in the face of terrorism, it should also persist in its efforts to promote processes of reform within the Palestinian Authority, consistent with the president’s commitment to lend tangible support to the project of Palestinian statehood once Palestinians are no longer led by those “compromised by terror.” The appoint-

ment of a prime minister is a hopeful signpost along this road. Washington should work for the full “empowerment” of the Palestinian prime minister, press for more comprehensive reform, and assist with efforts to promote dialogue between Israel and the new Palestinian leadership to reach preliminary understandings on defusing conflict. If Arabs, Palestinians, and Israelis take the necessary steps to make the regional environment more conducive to diplomacy, that would pave the way for a more ambitious agenda for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, including intensive presidential engagement.

i. building a new iraq

With the fall of Saddam Husayn's regime, the top priority for the United States should be ensuring security so that Iraq can be reconstructed and then transformed. Unless Iraq becomes a stable, responsible, and friendly country, it could reemerge as a threat to the international order, conceivably reconstituting its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. The United States cannot skimp on its commitment to building a new Iraq—not in America's own image but according to the free wishes of the liberated Iraqi people.

The best means to ensure a stable and friendly Iraq is to ensure that it has a broad-based government that respects the dignity of Iraqis, launched on a sustainable process of democratization. Replacing Saddam Husayn with another strongman is not a reliable way to achieve stability; after all, rule by strongmen and domination by one ethnic minority (the Sunni Arabs) has brought Iraq decades of instability and war. The surest way to break from

this pattern is for Iraqis to have a government that rests on the consent of the governed, not on the force of arms.

The process of creating such a government will have three stages: stabilization, transition, and a new government. How long each lasts should depend on accomplishing specified goals, ranging from a number of months to perhaps a few years, rather than being dictated by a preannounced timetable.

Stabilization

During the stabilization period that will immediately follow the demise of Saddam's regime, sufficient U.S. forces will need to be committed to provide security

and to respond to any remnants of the old order that continue resistance. A U.S.-led military administration will need to govern Iraq, though it

will be important to include international partners as soon as possible. To the extent practical, the U.S.-led force should work with the Iraqi government bureau-

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cracy, once Iraq's totalitarian political leaders, secret police agents, and those who stand accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity have been removed. Iraq is not a failed state in which the government has collapsed; it has many highly skilled technocrats ready to assume administrative responsibility. As some of the two million Iraqis abroad return, they too should play an important role, especially those from the community of Iraqis abroad who have labored so hard to keep alive the ideal of a free, open, more tolerant Iraq. Throughout, the U.S.-led military administration should reach out to Iraqis who espouse a democratic vision for their country; while all groups within the country must be represented, tribal and religious leaders should not be given privileged roles.

After thirty years of brutal dictatorship and twenty years of nearly continuous war, Iraqis want to begin the process of building their lives anew. In this effort, the United States should be a full partner. In order to demonstrate its commitment to Iraq's reconstruction, the United States should implement the principle that it will rebuild whatever civilian assets are destroyed during a war.

Transition

As soon as practicable, the U.S.-led military administration should give way to an international administration that will be characterized by these components:

Security. Once stabilization has been achieved, the security situation may remain fragile; there is a risk of unsettled conditions in parts of the country. Peace can be ensured only if there is a security force with enough muscle to put down challenges to the central authority. The force, established within an international or United Nations (UN)-authorized framework, should include an active role by the advanced industrial countries with participation by Muslim countries, but with a minimal role for Iraq's immediate neighbors. Meanwhile, Iraqi soldiers that are demobilized should be provided assistance for reintegration into civilian life.

Political. With stabilization of the security situation, authority over Iraq's civilian affairs should pass to an interim international administration charged with launching Iraq on a path toward a broad-based, representative government. In addition to Iraqis, this should include participation from representatives of a broad range of countries, rather than just the wartime allies. Any role for regional states will have to balance Iraqi national pride and suspicions about its neighbors' intentions with the need to give regional states a stake in the success of the transitional process.

Building a more broad-based, representative Iraqi government is not only what U.S. and world public opinion will expect, it is also the best way to ensure the legitimacy of the new government in the eyes of Iraqis, rebutting charges that post-Saddam Iraq is only an American puppet. Throughout, the United States should support a vision of a democratic future for Iraq while maintaining realistic, achievable expectations of what can be accomplished in the short run. Democratization is a process, not a one-time event; Washington's early focus should be on helping Iraqis build those institutions (such as a free press and responsible political parties) and on advocating those principles (such as free speech, minority rights, and the rule of law) that are essential elements of democratic development and have been denied to Iraqis during a generation of Ba'athist tyranny.

In the interval before free elections can be held at the national level, political authority should be spread widely rather than concentrated in the hands of a new powerful national leader. An executive council and a consultative council should be chosen from those with strong support on the ground. Initially, to avoid a premature focus on who will serve as its leader, the executive council should have a rotating head. The selection of members for these bodies

should openly favor modern-minded forces committed to democratic values rather than automatically relying on traditional ethnic and religious leaders. To a considerable extent, power should be devolved away from Baghdad to local officials, encouraging the emergence of new leaders. Those local officials would include the two Kurdish regional governments run by the PUK and the KDP, whose support for the new government will be critical to its success. The role of Shi'is in public life will need to be increased in such a way as to meet Shi'i expectations, while the United States should encourage the emergence of new Sunni Arab leaders to assuage apprehensions among Sunnis that they are being marginalized.

Iraq can pay its own way in the world if relieved of the heavy burden of Saddam-era debt. . . .

Economic. Given that Iraq has the financial and human resources of a middle-income country, the United States should encourage Iraqis to take charge of the reconstruction process, with aid organizations playing a limited role. That Iraqis themselves are leading the reconstruction effort will also counter the myth that the war was fought for foreigners to gain control of Iraqi oil. Questions of whether U.S. and other international oil companies should play a prominent role in expanding oil output, and if so which oil companies, should be left up to Iraqis and to the workings of market forces.

Iraq can pay its own way in the world if relieved of the heavy burden of Saddam-era debt. The new government should be given immediate access to the several billion dollars in Iraqi cash in the oil-for-food escrow account held by the UN. Setting an example for others, the United States should forgive all the debt Iraq owes it and should urge the Gulf monarchies and industrial countries to do the same. In addition, the United States should ask Kuwait to contribute to Iraq's post-Saddam reconstruction by dropping its remaining claims for compensation, which would allow a quick end to the UN-mandated deduction of 25 percent of Iraqi oil exports for compensation payments.

Formation of a New Government

While the United States and its allies must commit the time and effort needed to the transitional administration, they should not stay longer than needed to develop a new constitution and the civil society institutions necessary for national elections, and to supervise the peaceful transfer of power to full Iraqi authority. Experience suggests that it may be difficult to produce in short order the fully democratic and prosperous Iraq for which Iraqis and Americans both yearn. The U.S.-led coalition would be well advised to set achievable objectives for postwar Iraq, while

also working toward a grander vision to be realized over time. It would be a serious error for the U.S.-in-

fluenced international administration and security force to overstay their welcome; both the cause of democracy in Iraq and America's own national interests would be hurt were the United States perceived to be a colonial power erecting an empire in Iraq. What can be accomplished in a few years depends crucially on how ready the Iraqis themselves are to break with the past political patterns and build a new political community.

One key area in which the United States and its allies are likely to stay involved for years is security. They should ensure that the new government has domestic security forces adequate to face any internal challenges. Washington should make every effort to build a close security relationship with Iraq's new government, including the reconstruction of its armed forces with Western expertise and equipment. Such steps provide the best guarantee that post-Saddam Iraq adopts responsible policies that contribute to regional security. They also provide the most effective way to prevent a new Iraqi leadership from deciding to resume its WMD programs with the technical knowledge and expertise that will still be available—even

with the intrusive monitoring system that will remain in place for the indefinite future following the complete postwar destruction of Iraq's WMD programs.

Furthermore, a rebuilt Iraqi military in a close relationship with the United States and its allies could take on an active role in protecting the Gulf, allowing reduction of the U.S. military profile in the Gulf and less Western dependence on Saudi Arabia, which might sit well in both Riyadh and Washington. At the same time, the U.S.-led coalition should take advantage of Saddam's downfall to seek new security arrangements with Iraq's neighbors, especially Iran. Tehran needs to know that threats it poses to regional stability—especially its pursuit of WMD—will be a key factor in determining the size and power of Iraq's reconstituted armed forces.

Conclusion

Investing in a new Iraq must be viewed as the logical continuation of any war effort. Victory in war will be squandered if it is not followed by a similarly determined effort to help Iraqis rebuild their country. After freeing Iraq from tyranny, the guiding principle governing U.S. policy in post-Saddam Iraq should be to help the Iraqi people regain control over their country so that they can define their own national destiny in peace and security. America's endeavor in Iraq will ultimately fail if the United States attempts to remake Iraq in its own image; America's endeavor will succeed—with beneficial impact on U.S. interests throughout the Middle East—should U.S. efforts culminate in providing the free people of Iraq their long-denied opportunity to build their future for themselves.

ii. winning the peace, beyond iraq

Saddam Husayn's Iraq represents the most acute case of a Middle East tyranny that employs the tools of WMD and terrorism to advance a strategy of aggression. Even with Saddam's demise, an array of terrorist groups and rogue states will continue to pose grave danger to U.S. interests in the Middle East; even with the downfall of dictatorship in Iraq, unchecked authoritarianism elsewhere in the Middle East will continue to drive the peoples of the region to seek radical, often militantly anti-American alternatives. As the United States begins the process of investing in a new, peaceful Iraq, it should focus its energies, prestige, and authority toward addressing these threats.

Terrorism

International terrorism remains the most urgent threat to American lives, property, and interests, both at home and abroad. This is the case despite the unprecedented efforts and significant successes in the war on terror to date. Even with the loss of its Afghan

redoubt, al-Qaeda remains a viable and dangerous global terrorist network. Nor are al-Qaeda and its affiliates the only source of terrorist threat. Hizballah and other groups operate around the world, including within the United States itself, and pose a clear and present threat to U.S. citizens and interests. Fighting the multifront war on international terrorism should be guided by the following principles:

- *Recognize the interconnections among Islamist terrorist organizations.* International terrorism is a web linking many disparate groups, so much so that their common aims can bridge even traditional divisions such as those between Shi'i and Sunni extremists. U.S. counterterrorism efforts must target the individuals and front organizations behind groups such as Hizballah and Hamas with the same vigor that it targets those associated directly with al-Qaeda. Moreover, the United States must press its allies, primarily in Europe and the Middle East, to do the same.

- *Target terrorists' financial and logistical support networks.* To be effective, the war on terror must

have a strategic focus on the entirety of the terror matrix. Tactically, this must translate into taking action against both operational and logistical networks, as well as targeting the full range of groups making up the international terror web and the states that continue to support them. The nineteen hijackers responsible for the September 11 attacks were funded and facilitated by dozens of individuals, front organizations, and affiliates that provided essential logistical support.

To fight this sort of network, the United States must press countries around the world to target terrorist groups in their entirety, including their allegedly nonterrorist “social” or “political” wings that in fact provide shelter for terrorist activities. Terror groups do not draw a distinction between their military and political wings, seeing them as united in a common cause. However, many European and Arab countries do distinguish between the good and bad wings of terror groups, which necessarily impedes collective antiterror efforts. Urging a change in approach among U.S. allies on this critical issue must be a top U.S. priority. Similarly, Washington needs to press Saudi Arabia to implement fully its pledge to cooperate formally with international bodies in the fight against terrorist financing and money laundering, and to tighten its regulatory oversight of banks, financial institutions, and charities.

· *Fight the political legitimization of terror.* So long as many nations continue to make distinctions between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” forms of terrorism, it will be difficult to succeed in the war on terror. In both international forums and in bilateral representations, the United States needs to persist in pressing foreign capitals to adopt a universal approach to fighting terrorism, rather than an approach that focuses idiosyncratically on specific terrorist groups, ethnicities, religions, or regions. The guiding principle for the war on terrorism must be

that no objective, however worthy, legitimizes the deliberate targeting of civilians for political purposes. Indeed, the United States should make clear that it will fight vigorously against those who, even for a legitimate political goal, resort to terrorism or condone it. Washington should particularly urge Arab and Muslim friends concerned about the Palestinian, Kashmiri, Chechen, and other conflicts that they will find a sympathetic ear in Washington only when they actively deny legitimacy to terrorists, curb incitement to terror, halt the flow of funds to terrorist groups, and commit solely to peaceful resolution of conflict.

Rogue States

The United States should build upon its coalition victory over Saddam’s Iraq to focus on the problems posed by other Middle Eastern states—such as Iran, Syria, Libya, and Sudan—whose overtures to Washington do not mask their more fundamental policies, including their support for terrorism and pursuit of WMD. Syria, for example, has perfected the art of appearing to be sufficiently cooperative on some issues—first on the peace process, then against al-Qaeda—that Washington defers making demands on Damascus about its general policy of supporting terror, such as its arming of Hizballah and its sheltering of the group’s operational leadership.

For its part, Iran takes advantage of the split between its formal, largely powerless government and its aggressive, revolutionary institutions to argue that the state should not be sanctioned for the actions of hardliners, even when endorsed by Iran’s supreme leader. Libya has deflected international condemnation by dangling the prospect of payment to Pan Am Flight 103 victims and acknowledgment of its responsibility, without ending its pursuit of WMD. And, while Sudan has stepped up counterterrorism cooperation with the United States with regard to al-

Qaeda, a number of international terrorist groups continue to use Sudan as a safe haven.

With the image of Saddam's downfall fresh in the minds of Middle Easterners, the moment will be ripe to press these governments on the most threatening aspects of their behavior. Washington should focus first on Syria and Iran. The basic strategy should be to convince these states to end their most dangerous activities by offering, through bilateral and multi-lateral means, significant incentives ("bigger carrots") for responsible behavior and promising painful, punitive measures ("bigger sticks") for continued irresponsible behavior.

Syria. The gravest risk from Syria stems from its arming and protection of Hizballah, which could not pose nearly as substantial a threat to regional peace and international security without state sponsorship from Syria. The expectation in the Middle East is that after victory in the Gulf, the United States will focus on Syrian support for Hizballah and for Palestinian terrorist groups whose leaderships operate from Damascus. After all, post-war, Syria will have lost the lucrative sanctions-busting trade with Iraq; U.S. forces in Iraq will be on Syria's border; and, after having given aid and succor to Saddam's Iraq in wartime, Syria will be surrounded by close friends of the United States in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Israel.

Failure to deal with Syrian support of terrorism would both miss an opportunity to address this problem and, even more devastating to long-term U.S. interests, create the impression that Washington is not particularly concerned about the threat to regional peace and stability that Hizballah and other terrorist groups pose. In its engagement with Damascus, the U.S. objective should be to convince Syria to:

- end the provision and transshipment of arms and military goods to Hizballah;

- begin the process of disarming Hizballah, as was the case with all other militias in Lebanon;
- authorize the full deployment of Lebanese Armed Forces throughout southern Lebanon and along the entirety of the Israel-Lebanon border, including the Lebanese side of the the Shebaa Farms area; and
- close the Syria-based offices and Syria- and Lebanon-based training camps of Palestinian terrorist groups.

Incentives for such responsible behavior could range from support for Syria's economic reform efforts to U.S. support for an early resumption of negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in the context of an Israel-Syria peace treaty; punitive measures could include the tightening of economic sanctions on Damascus and other measures—including covert measures—to address the terrorist threat directly. Washington should also make clear to Lebanon's friends around the world that Beirut, too, will face larger sticks and carrots with regard to Hizballah: the stick of designation as a state sponsor of terror and the carrot of substantial economic aid, especially for southern Lebanon.

Iran. Iran is, as U.S. intelligence confirms, the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism. While the most direct way to sever the

link between Tehran and its main terror arm, Hizballah, is via Damascus, Washington must remain vigilant about Iran's support for a network of Islamist terrorist organizations and persistent in pressing Iran to end its financial, political, material, and operational support to them.

At the same time, Iran's own pursuit of WMD, especially nuclear weapons, is the gravest risk that Iran poses to U.S. interests. While the United States has long been worried about Iranian WMD development, recent revelations about Iranian nuclear activi-

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ties make this an especially urgent concern. In the aftermath of a war to disarm Iraq, Washington needs to make clear to Tehran, both directly and working with Russia and the European Union (EU), that Iran's WMD programs actually worsen Iran's security rather than enhance it. The United States should reiterate its willingness to discuss these issues directly with the Iranian government, an offer that Tehran has regrettably rejected for many years. Nevertheless, Washington should continue to seek avenues to press Tehran to commit to a comprehensive and credible nonproliferation program that, at a minimum, includes:

- Iran's signing and full implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol (the final stage of Program 93+2); and
- Iran's agreement to forgo acquisition of a full nuclear fuel cycle, in other words, forgoing uranium enrichment and plutonium separation.

Until Iran makes such commitments and shows verifiable progress toward their implementation, the United States should urge Russia not to ship reactor fuel to the nuclear power plant at Bushehr and should urge the EU not to sign a trade agreement with Iran. Failing that, the United States should also consider declaring that the closer Iran gets to having nuclear weapons, the more America will counter the potential Iranian threat. In particular, the United States needs to preserve the flexibility of a military response, such as directing more assets against Iran and providing more support to friendly countries near Iran.

Authoritarianism

Victory in the Gulf provides Washington the opportunity to address the longer term threat to U.S. interests posed by the Middle East's glaring "democracy deficit." For decades, the bipartisan view in Washington has been that democracy complicates the Arab-Is-

rael peace process and threatens to replace shaky regimes with fanatical revolutionary states. Setting aside whether that was ever the case, it is clear that the fundamentals have now changed. After all, authoritarianism run amok produced Saddam's tyranny; the authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority is a major obstacle to peacemaking; and authoritarianism among U.S. Arab allies helped lead them to export their security problems, eventually resulting in the horror of September 11.

With Saddam's fall, President Bush should articulate a vision for a more open, liberal, tolerant, free-market, and democratic Middle East. This theme should be expounded regionally to address the skeptical peoples of the area but detailed to fit each national case. Already, many countries recognize that democratization will be an important postwar theme of U.S. policy and are calibrating both their policies and public relations accordingly. Washington should welcome these promises of change and insist on their implementation, but recognize that, as was the case in the post-Desert Storm period, they are as often attempts to co-opt or divert us as they are sincere commitments to political reform.

The focus of U.S. policy should be to encourage progress down the democratization path, starting with an emphasis on greater tolerance, personal freedom and rule of law, culminating in periodic, free and fair elections. This campaign must be imbued with a sense of long-term commitment, an aversion to quick-fix solutions, and a rejection of the notion that America should remake the Middle East in its own image. In this effort, America's most important and needy allies are the hardy band of Muslim liberals who are engaged in daily battle against the cultural totalitarianism dominant in much of today's Middle East and who yearn for America's support in this fight. A special focus should be placed on

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women—promoting their rights, education, inclusion, and empowerment.

The Bush administration is already committed to two radical experiments in democratization in the Middle East—in Iraq and inside the Palestinian Authority. Their success is essential to the larger effort. Successes for the Iraqi and Palestinian peoples will create their own demonstration effect elsewhere in the region.

Democracy promotion will be easiest to translate into policy vis-à-vis hostile states. Topping the list is Iran. Encouraging the democratic forces inside Iran should assume a high priority, post-Saddam. President Bush's decision to forgo efforts to distinguish between moderates and radicals and, instead, put America squarely on the side of the Iranian people's thirst for freedom is the right approach. The administration should build on the president's statements and accelerate the use of electronic media—television, radio, internet—to bombard Iran with messages in support of freedom. Washington should also invest more in people-to-people contact with Iranians of various walks of life. More effort must be made to facilitate these contacts—such as streamlining visa procedures—in line with legitimate security concerns.

Toward countries that have already begun to embark down a road of careful, regime-led liberalization, Washington should offer incentives to persist in liberalization and to lower the risks of pursuing that choice. Free trade agreements, like the one approved with Jordan and currently under negotiation with Morocco, are precisely the sort of appropriate long-term incentives. Also, to enable some of these countries to receive funds under President Bush's innovative Millennium Challenge Account, the administration should amend criteria for recipients to emphasize performance on reform, not rigid income levels.

America's friendly authoritarians—especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia—pose more difficult problems. They are very different cases.

Egypt is a republican regime with the appearance of a modern constitutional democracy but little of the content. With the Egyptians, U.S. policy should be to combine a top-down approach of pressing Cairo to live up to its own laudable constitutional and international commitments (including its support for the principles it pledged to support when it assented to the founding document of the U.S.-led Community of Democracies); and a bottom-up approach of supporting liberal reformers committed to peaceful political change. Recent high-profile but largely symbolic steps by the Egyptian government do not obscure the need for far-reaching improvement on promoting religious tolerance, banning incitement from state media, promoting women's role in public life, and defending the rule of law. Washington should press Cairo with special vigor on the overtly political use of state security courts and on laws that impede U.S. pro-democracy assistance to worthy nongovernmental organizations.

Saudi Arabia, in contrast, is an absolute monarchy whose rulers still reject the idea of democracy and many of the principles that are essential to it. With the Saudis, U.S. policy should be to urge consistent progress along the lines of best regional practices of other peninsula states. Several of the smaller Gulf states are making encouraging progress toward establishing governments that are more accountable, transparent, rule-based, consultative, and tolerant of public criticism. Through representations that are both public and private in nature, Washington should urge the Saudis to move in that direction. Expanding the scope for participation—economically and politically—is ultimately in the interests of the Saudi

Encouraging the democratic forces inside Iran should assume a high priority, post-Saddam. . . .

regime, particularly as it imparts hope that realities can change.

As part of this democratization effort, economic transformation has an important role. Offering incentives such as free trade agreements, “qualified industrial zones,” or accession to the World Trade Organization can provide governments with a useful pretext to take steps they would resist otherwise. This applies both to oil exporters who need to diversify their economies by reducing dependence on hydrocarbons as well as non-oil exporters who need to tear down old monopolies and high tariff barriers to engage competitively with the outside world. While economic reform should not substitute for political reform, it forms part of the overall liberalization agenda for the Middle East.

In all these countries, local leaders will not take Washington seriously unless U.S. policy is articulated at the highest political level and affirmed throughout all bilateral dialogues. To complement these private exchanges, the administration should not shy from blunt, forthright discussion with allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia in annual reportage on human rights and religious freedom. In addition, the administration should initiate additional annual reportage on incitement in state-controlled media and women’s rights. Experience has shown that the glare of international spotlight is an effective tool in bringing about change.

Another key element of U.S. democracy promotion in the Middle East needs to be a thoroughly revamped public diplomacy toward the peoples of the region. This outreach should highlight three themes: robust advocacy of U.S. policy; explanation of U.S. ideals and values; and a willingness to make common cause with liberal forces throughout the region committed to peaceful political change.

Conclusion

Progress in the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq will create a momentum for change in the Middle East that should be used to reinforce the fight against terrorism, pressure on rogues, and promotion of democracy. These are not separate items on a laundry list of policy goals; rather, they are organically connected. Left unchecked, rogue states may supply terrorist groups with the WMD that enhances their lethality a thousand-fold; left unaddressed, the stifled political cultures of closed societies may give rise to more Bin Ladens eyeing soft American targets rather than hardened ones at home. The precondition for success on these fronts remains Iraq: If the United States fulfills its mission in Iraq, it will not have to choose among competing priorities; if it fails in its mission in Iraq, it will not have the luxury to choose among them, either.

iii. reviving the prospect for arab-israeli peace

The postwar period circa 2003 is bound to evoke comparisons to the postwar period circa 1991, when the United States used its power and prestige to launch a diplomatic process at Madrid that paved the way for Oslo-era peace agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, and a near breakthrough to peace between Israel and Syria. However, it is important to reject facile comparisons to the early 1990s and to evaluate the situation in its own right.

There are at least three key differences that explain why Middle East peacemaking should not automatically occupy high presidential priority in the aftermath of victory in the Gulf:

- in contrast to the 1991 situation, the United States will continue to face an array of clear and present dangers to its security which should command first attention on the president's agenda;
- in contrast to the 1991 situation, the United States now has many years of post-Madrid and

post-Oslo experience to inform its approach to Middle East peacemaking;

- in contrast to the post-1993 situation, there is no support within Israel—and little enthusiasm in Europe or even Arab capitals—for a policy of rehabilitating Yasir Arafat and the PLO in order to produce a partner for a “land for peace” deal, given that few today believe that Arafat has (as he promised to do) discarded his terrorist past in order to achieve his people's nationalist aspirations through diplomacy.

Yet three factors weigh in the opposite direction, in favor of U.S. activism:

- that an overwhelming majority of Israelis and Palestinians wish to create a political situation in which they live apart via “separation”;
- that growing percentages of Palestinians recognize that the failed leadership of Arafat and the continued resort to terrorism have led to calamity; and

- that failure to take advantage of the opportunity provided by victory to invest in the prospect of a secure peace would itself constitute a dereliction of American leadership.

This time, high-level presidential engagement needs to be conditioned on important steps first being taken to build a political atmosphere in which peacemaking has a high likelihood of success. Fostering this “enabling environment” for peacemaking should constitute the administration’s peace process priority.

‘New Palestinian Leadership’: Transition to a Post-Arafat Era

Given the legacy of the past decade’s rule of the Palestinian Authority, new Palestinian leadership must show proven commitment to three principles:

Delegitimation of violence. At no time during the Oslo process were those who carried out acts of terror against Israelis ever branded by the Palestinian leadership as enemies of the Palestinian national cause. This must change. The key is for new Palestinian leaders to return to the words and spirit of the original Arafat commitment to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in other words, to delegitimize violence and terror as tactics or tools of negotiation.

Legitimacy of Israel. The targeting of civilians inside Israel, especially by groups associated with Fatah, has raised considerable doubt as to whether the goal of the Palestinian uprising has been to achieve statehood *beside* Israel or *in place of* Israel. New Palestinian leadership must unambiguously declare itself committed to—and operate on the principle of—recognizing Israel’s moral legitimacy as a Jewish state with a right to sovereign independence in the Middle East.

Open, transparent, and accountable government. In the years following the Oslo accords, the general approach of Israel and, by extension, the United States was that Palestinian internal affairs were irrelevant to

diplomacy. In retrospect, this was a mistake and has been recognized as such not only by Israelis and Americans but, most importantly, by Palestinians. Achieving definable progress toward political, economic, and security reform is essential and has been increasingly embraced by many Palestinians.

New Forms of Leadership by Arab States

In contrast to the 1990s, the Bush administration should not be party to a peace diplomacy in which Arab allies exhort Washington to “engage” (a codeword for pressuring Israel) and Israel to compromise without their own substantive contribution to the equation of success, including:

- Using their influence to advance the prospects of new Palestinian leadership described above;
- Taking a lead role in delegitimizing terror, making it clear that they join Palestinian reformers in branding those who use terror as enemies of the Palestinian cause;
- Halting the flow of money from rejectionist elements that fuels terror and undermines peacemaking;
- Implementing commitments to invest in the economic health of the Palestinian Authority;
- Supporting the concept of compromise by a) providing a political umbrella for Palestinians seeking an honorable peace with Israel based on “painful concessions” by all sides, and b) recognizing Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign Jewish state in the Middle East; and
- Addressing directly the

Israeli people’s skepticism of Arab intentions by endorsing people-to-people exchanges, resurrecting multilateral negotiations on regional economic issues, and undertaking high-profile meetings with Israeli leaders and visits to Israel.

This time, high-level presidential engagement needs to be conditioned on important steps first being taken to build a political atmosphere in which peacemaking has a high likelihood of success. . . .

Understandings with Israel and Israeli Responsibilities

As Washington continues to provide political and material support to Israel's battle against terrorism, the administration should also urge Israel to lend additional substance to its commitment to a secure peace with an eventual independent Palestinian state. Most important will be to reach a set of private, bilateral understandings with the United States on the following issues:

- parameters of security operations in the territories;
- benchmarks for Palestinian progress on security matters and appropriate Israeli responses;
- easing of day-to-day conditions for Palestinians;
- ways to accelerate the process of Palestinian reform, including efforts to promote dialogue between Israel and new Palestinian leadership—including the new Palestinian prime minister—to reach preliminary understandings on defusing conflict; and
- the contours of the “painful concessions” envisioned by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as Israel's contribution to an ultimate peace accord.

In the public realm, Washington should urge Israel to affirm its support of President Bush's June 24, 2002, vision of two states, living side-by-side in peace and security, and take steps that buttress Israel's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians, such as strengthening the humanitarian effort on behalf of Palestinian civilians; dismantling illegal, unauthorized settler outposts; and ending settlement activity that can impede the president's vision of peacemaking. Specifically, Washington should ask Israel to implement fully a policy of no outward expansion of existing settlements and a freeze on establishing new settlements, which together will mean that no additional land will be taken for settlement construction. In the end, Israel must

reach out publicly in a way that credibly demonstrates its intentions toward the Palestinian people once the Palestinians have a leadership prepared to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and to forswear, finally and irrevocably, terror and violence as tools of policy.

Defining a New Partnership with Europe on Arab-Israeli Issues

The Quartet formula may have massaged differences between America on the one hand and the EU, Russia, and the UN on the other, but it did not resolve them. For most American officials, “pursuing the peace process” is a codeword for creating an enabling environment in which Israelis and Arabs can once again attempt to resolve their differences via negotiations. In contrast, for most European officials, “pursuing the peace process” is a codeword for recognizing that a decade of Madrid and Oslo has exhausted the prospects for successful bilateral negotiation and that European interests demand that this conflict be resolved through other means, such as the imposition of a solution by the UN or the dispatch of armed monitors, as in Bosnia. The Roadmap masks this chasm but does not bridge it.

The United States remains the only country that has political standing and moral suasion with all protagonists, the only country trusted by Israel to have genuine concern for its security, the only country to whom Palestinians (and other Arabs) turn to deposit their concessions

The United States remains the only country that has political standing and moral suasion with all protagonists. . . .

in the hope that Washington will wrangle compensating concessions out of Israel, and the only country in which all parties have confidence to guarantee an agreement. Indeed, the prewar experience of some traditional European allies adopting anti-American positions on Iraq for reasons related as much to politics as to security only reaffirms the importance of the

United States maintaining its own independent authority to render judgments on contentious security issues in the Arab-Israeli arena.

That said, there is room for greater U.S.-European understanding on peace process issues, should the parties be ready to accommodate each other's core concerns. An enhanced role for Europe in the negotiation and implementation of peace accords may be welcome. Practically speaking, however, such cooperation can only realistically take the form of more active Euro-efforts to realize the preconditions for heightened U.S. engagement described above. If European leaders had invested the same amount of political capital in helping to bring about President Bush's June 24 vision of "new Palestinian leadership" that they did in pressing for the many drafts of the Roadmap, then the prospects for real progress would be much more advanced than is currently the case. Indeed, given the very distinct prospect that Arafat will seek to impede an "empowered" prime minister from exerting authority, it is critical that the Europeans publicly echo President Bush's vote of no-confidence in Arafat's leadership and his obstructionist tactics.

Options for U.S. Engagement

If successful, a multipronged U.S. effort focused on encouraging Arabs, Palestinians, and Israelis to step up to their responsibilities as outlined above would pave the way for a more ambitious agenda for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. Assuming all sides are fulfilling their responsibilities, the United States should consider various options for advancing toward that goal. Broadly speaking, three alternatives exist:

Option One: Return to bilateral negotiations for a "permanent status" agreement. In a postwar regional environment in which radicals are in retreat and Palestinians are led by new leaders untainted by terrorism, a return to bilateral negotiations may make powerful sense. Reaching a "permanent sta-

tus" accord, however, will not be easy; indeed, if it proved impossible to achieve in the relatively peaceful days of Camp David 2000, it will be even more difficult to achieve after the parties internalize their own lessons from the bloody events since September 2000. What is clear is that any accord reached will now be based (as President Bush's June 24 speech stated) on performance, not timetables, and it will need to include a clear delineation of those consequences that flow from nonperformance. To be sure, if the prerequisites for success are met, the expectations will be understandably high that the United States will lead an intensive effort to produce a permanent status agreement.

Option Two: Provisional statehood as a way-station to a final arrangement. Even in the context of the most conducive regional environment, it would not be surprising if the parties still lacked the trust, confidence, and will to make compromises necessary to achieve a permanent agreement. In that circumstance, the United States and its friends may choose to advance the strategy of provisional statehood, first articulated in President Bush's June 24 speech and incorporated as a key feature of the Roadmap for peacemaking advanced by the U.S.-UN-EU-Russia Quartet.

Option Three: Coordinated unilateralism. There is a possibility that even a coordinated effort among the members of the Quartet will not permit Israelis and Palestinians to overcome accumulated mistrust and suspicion to reach the lesser objective of an interim accord on provisional statehood. In this case, the parties themselves are likely to opt for unilateral acts that each believes will provide some progress toward their respective strategic goals: for Israel, unilateral disengagement from a significant portion of the West Bank and Gaza; for Palestinians, declaration of independent statehood in territories from which Israel had withdrawn.

This is, by no means, the preferred path to peacemaking. If Israeli redeployment occurs while the intifada still rages, it may embolden radical elements to believe that terrorism had succeeded where diplomacy had failed; more terror is then sure to follow.

In this circumstance, the United States should work with each of the parties separately (as well as with Arab and European friends) to manage this process of sequential unilateralism so that it is as peaceful as possible, so that there may actually be some parallel understandings, and so that it results in a situation from which the parties are better able to reengage in negotiations for a permanent peace agreement in the future.

Conclusion

The strategy for Arab-Israeli peacemaking outlined above falls under the heading of “rebuilding for peace.” It is founded on the idea that all protago-

nists must do their share to make the peacemaking environment more conducive to success before the United States fully invests its postwar prestige, authority, and political capital in another round of high-stakes peace diplomacy. This is not a strategy of solutionism whereby the United States (or its allies) can impose its vision of peace on recalcitrant local parties—either through international fiat, Bosnia-style armed international monitors, or some form of international trusteeship over Palestinian territories. While the parties themselves may choose bolder action, as was the case in the past, the United States should not itself force the pace of diplomacy—instead playing an enabling role and always standing ready to assist if the parties seek U.S. help. Should the preconditions be met, the administration should be prepared to focus high-level presidential engagement on taking advantage of the opportunity to replace this terrible conflict with a secure peace.

signatories

Lawrence Eagleburger served as secretary of state in the George H. W. Bush administration.

Newt Gingrich, a former Republican congressman from Georgia, served as speaker of the House of Representatives.

Alexander Haig served as secretary of state in the Reagan administration.

Robert Kerrey served as a Democratic member of the United States Senate, representing Nebraska.

William Perry served as secretary of defense in the Clinton administration.

Fred Thompson served as a Republican member of the United States Senate, representing Tennessee.

R. James Woolsey served as director of central intelligence in the Clinton administration