

## Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 154: Extricating America from Its Middle Eastern Entanglement

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### Executive Summary

The successful outcome of a war tends to create unrealistic expectations. World War I was supposed to have been the war to end all wars. World War II was expected to usher in a new era of permanent peace. There was in the United States, in the days following the military victory in the Persian Gulf, a sense of omnipotence similar to the euphoria that dominated Israel after the Six-Day war in 1967, a feeling that everything was possible in arranging the political cards of the Middle East; that after Saddam Hussein, an Iraqi Thomas Jefferson would come to power in Baghdad and a window of opportunity would be opened for democracy, stability, and peace in the Middle East.

As the decadent Kuwaiti emir returned to his liberated city-state, American policy experts and pundits discussed plans for establishing a constitutional monarchy in Kuwait and a democracy in Iraq, and for launching a Marshall Plan for economic development in the region to close the gap between the "have" and the "have not" states.[1] Others called for structuring a NATO-type security arrangement in the gulf and in the entire Middle East and for using American leadership to bring peace between Israelis and Arabs.[2]

### Making the Middle East Safe for Democracy?

One source of those high expectations was the misconceived attempt to apply the post-World War II script to the post-Gulf War Middle East. We forget, however, that the reconstruction of Germany and Japan was successful because it was based on existing and very powerful civil societies, strong national identities, large educated middle classes, and previous experience with political and economic freedom.[3] Some or all of those ingredients are missing in most Middle Eastern societies today.

Indeed, as the immediate post-Gulf War developments in Kuwait and Iraq suggest, those states and most other Middle Eastern countries lack the political culture necessary to deal with one of the major dilemmas of politics: how to reconcile order and stability on the one hand and freedom and justice on the other. Those countries lack agreed-upon mechanisms for the peaceful transfer of power and, as a result, either produce central and somewhat heavy-handed governmental authorities or deteriorate into political and social chaos.[4]

The region's governments, like other governments in the Third World, face a pervasive crisis of political legitimacy. They are unable to mobilize domestic support except by invoking a dream that could undermine them: a unified Arab nation or an Islamic empire. That action, in turn, invites other regional powers to meddle in their domestic problems and to create more sources of instability.

Hence, the oil-rich regimes of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait face Catch-22 dilemmas. Those countries declare their commitments to Arab and Islamic solidarity to lend political legitimacy to their rulers. However, that very commitment encourages their resource-poor Arab brothers, such as Yemen and Jordan, to demand that they share their oil revenues. Indeed, the Arab solidarity argument was one justification for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.[5]

Moreover, most of the region's states are superficial entities that were coproduced by British and French imperialism and that, in addition to their superficiality, lack any political legitimacy, economic viability, or experience with liberal or democratic traditions. In those societies, various ethnic and religious groups are engaged in a never-ending competition for power, which is won by whichever military clique occupies the national television station.[6]

### **Iraq: A New Lebanon**

Iraq is a case in point. The Iraqi nation is a mosaic of three ethnic-religious groups: Arab-Sunnis (20 percent of the population), Arab-Shi'ites (60 percent), and Kurds (20 percent). The Sunnis, more specifically a particular clique from Saddam's birthplace, Tikhrit, have controlled a military dictatorship backed by the Pan-Arabist and socialist Ba'ath party, which has ruled Iraq for more than two decades. The Iraqi regime has excluded the Arab-Shi'ite majority, which is sympathetic to the fundamentalist Shi'ite regime in Tehran, from top political positions in the government and military and has quashed Kurdish campaigns for political autonomy by executing Kurdish leaders and gassing Kurdish civilians.[7]

Saddam's methods enabled him to bring a certain stability and order to Iraq. While espousing Arab nationalist rhetoric, he also propagated a more separatist and secular Iraqi nationalism, which traces its roots to Assyrian and Babylonian history, as a unifying identity for the country's diverse population. The weakening of Saddam and his regime as a result of the Gulf War is helping to produce a new Iraqi civil war, the violence of which might exceed that in Lebanon.[8]

Indeed, internecine fighting has already erupted. Shi'ite groups in the South, aided by Tehran, have challenged the Baghdad regime. For a time, Kurdish groups controlled large parts of the North and tried to set up independent political institutions, which in turn might have strengthened separatist Kurdish forces in Turkey. At the same time other exile groups, consisting mainly of those who lost in intra-Iraqi struggles in the past, have been aided by Syria and its ruling Ba'ath party in establishing an alternative Iraqi government in exile. (Those groups blame the United States for the mess in Iraq and are requesting humanitarian and medical aid from Washington.)[9]

A rebel victory would strengthen the Iraqi Shi'ite groups with their goal of establishing a fundamentalist regime in Baghdad--a regime that could ally itself with Iran. A related danger is that pro-Damascus exile organizations might seek an alliance between the Iraqi and the Syrian wings of the Ba'ath party. The fall of Saddam could produce two nightmare scenarios for Washington. In the short run, a civil war could invite outside powers, especially Syria, Turkey, and Iran, to stake out territorial claims in Iraq, leading to wider conflicts and years of instability. "My worry is the Lebanonization of Iraq," explained Italian foreign minister Gianni DeMichelis.[10] Such fragmentation of the country, he added, could result in years of general anarchy and could further destabilize the gulf region.

In the long run, a radical-fundamentalist regional bloc consisting of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran might emerge. Such a bloc would be in a position to control the central region of the Middle East and become a major threat to Israel and the Arab gulf states as well as to any American military presence in the region. That development would create conditions under which Washington could be again asked to prevent aggression and maintain stability.

The Bush administration's foreign policymakers, after urging Iraqis to rise up and remove Saddam from power, now find themselves worried that his ouster could cause the breakup of Iraq and the rise of religious fundamentalism linked to Iran. If the choice is between the latter scenario and the continuing survival of Saddam's regime, Washington would no doubt prefer to see the devil it knows remain in power in Baghdad. Although the Bush administration continues to call for Saddam's ouster, it has decided not to intervene directly in Iraq's civil strife and has resisted suggestions that it take strong military actions to protect the rebels, although it has provided humanitarian aid.[11]

The choice, it seems, is not between democracy and Saddam. The best result U.S. officials apparently expect is a "user friendly" version of Saddam: a benign military dictator heading a rival clique inside the ruling Ba'ath party. Such a

regime would accommodate some of America's policy preferences and be accepted by conservative Arab gulf rulers, at least for a while, until the Middle Eastern political bazaar offered new bargains.

## **Renewed Repression in Kuwait**

The city-state of Kuwait is also not likely to adopt new democratic institutions in the near future. The al-Sabah family resisted calls for parliamentary elections before the war and will not welcome pressures for elections after Kuwait's liberation. It is no coincidence that the first act of the returning ruling family was to impose martial law. The explosive tensions among three groups--the al-Sabah clan members and their cronies, who left Kuwait immediately after the Iraqi invasion; the mainly middle-class and professional Kuwaitis, who remained in Kuwait and resisted the occupiers; and the large Palestinian minority, some of whom collaborated with the Iraqis--can break apart any remaining political order in Kuwait.[12]

The Kuwaiti government is reducing the pre-invasion population of 2 million by almost half by expelling many of the 800,000 non-Kuwaiti residents, including the 100,000 or more Palestinians. That expulsion has led to growing economic problems and to increasingly repressive measures against the Palestinian community. Opposition groups have been openly critical of al-Sabah family members who returned to rule Kuwait and successfully brought about the fall of the Kuwaiti cabinet, which had been accused of inefficiency and corruption.[13]

The large, Western-educated professional and business classes in Kuwait, plus a lack of any strong military institutions, could theoretically create a viable basis for a more open and democratic system. However, adopting a democratic model in Kuwait would undermine the repressive theocracy next door in Saudi Arabia, where women are still denied even the most basic civil rights and residents who are not royal family members are offered only crumbs of political power. The large Shi'ite minority is not offered even that.[14]

## **Washington's Policy Dilemmas**

Notwithstanding official American rhetoric encouraging moves toward democracy in the gulf region, Washington, bearing in mind the alternatives, will continue to tolerate the autocratic rule of sheiks. The Gulf War pointed to the long-term problem facing traditional Middle Eastern monarchies: To survive politically, they must continue to rely on direct and indirect American aid and military support. That dependency exposes their populations to competing Western political and economic models and creates politically explosive expectations. The discrepancy between the traditional ruling elites' pretensions of resisting the influence of outside "infidels" and those elites' alliances with those very infidels is revealed. Opposition from both modernizing and fundamentalist forces is quite likely at some point.

Those developments reflect the larger picture: neoconservative intellectuals in the United States insist that the global spread of democracy will also produce an increase in pro-American sentiment.[15] That is not the case in the Middle East. Anti-Americanism pervades the Arab and Moslem worlds and stems from resentment of both the tacit U.S.-Israeli alliance and direct American intervention in the region. Indeed, such states as Jordan, Algeria, and Yemen, which have experimented in recent years with quasi-free elections, have seen the forces of the more fundamentalist and anti-Western groups gain strength. In those countries during the Gulf War, one could also detect the strongest anti-American feeling, which put pressure on the incumbent regimes, especially Jordan's pro-American King Hussein, to adopt a more sympathetic policy toward Saddam.

The chances for making the Middle East safe for democracy, along with Washington's power to move the region's states in that direction, are therefore extremely limited. Actually, American efforts can create a backlash and produce major political costs for perceived American interests in the area since such efforts are bound to unleash anti-Western, authoritarian forces. At the same time, an alliance with the status quo regimes in the Arab world, such as those in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, will inevitably turn Washington into a symbol of repression in the eyes of democratic and revolutionary factions.

The United States faces a no-win situation in its relationship with existing political regimes. Attempting to democratize them produces political and social instability and creates a vacuum that entices militant domestic and outside forces. Trying to secure the power of existing regimes creates conditions that will lead to the inevitable rise of anti-American successor governments.

Unfortunately, the three political alternatives facing the region's people in the foreseeable future are decaying traditional monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait; religious fundamentalism, symbolized by Iran and its supporters in the region; and military dictatorships that espouse a relatively benign secular nationalism (Egypt and Algeria) or a ruthless secular nationalism (Iraq and Syria).

In all probability, Washington will continue to ally itself with benign dictators and traditional monarchs. For every regional friend it will win, Washington is bound to gain 10 new enemies for whom America represents not the winds of desirable change but the status quo of reactionary forces. When radical factions come to power, Washington will suffer the consequences of its policies as it did in Iran.

Americans will then express surprise and astonishment at the anti-American rhetoric and violence that will dominate the policies of the new regimes. Most Americans will be unwilling to accept the proposition that past U.S. policies had something to do with those adverse developments--that an Iraqi kid who lost his parents under the rubble of a Baghdad apartment building destroyed by American bombers might one day hijack an American airliner.

The Middle East is a region that is unlikely to be swept by the forces of democracy and economic freedom in the foreseeable future. Americans who thought it was difficult to bring glasnost and perestroika to the Soviet Union, which had had strong historical ties to the West, will discover that trying to implant those concepts in Middle Eastern systems, which are just emerging from the middle ages, is an impossible mission.

### **Establishing a Middle Eastern NATO?**

Competing with the goal of promoting democracy is what seems to be the more realistic goal of creating (through regional balance-of-power arrangements and American military commitments) a regional zone of stability and security. That effort also reflects a desire to produce in the Middle East a rerun of post-World War II Europe or post-1953 Korea. However, those security structures were based on a clear perception of an external threat and a set of rules of the game, which resulted from--among other things--the nuclear balance of terror, that produced a certain stability and predictability in the relationships among the major cold-war players. Those elements are missing in the Middle East.

### **Collective Security Schemes**

At a time when NATO's *raison d'être* is becoming passé, some would like us to believe that we will be able to establish a similar security arrangement in the Middle East. A few weeks after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Secretary of State James A. Baker III discussed in very general terms the formation of a regional security structure in the gulf. The structure would have drawn Saudi Arabia and the other sheikdoms (with a limited "over the horizon" American military presence) into a new alliance whose main goal would have been to contain Iraq's military power. Congress was unenthusiastic about that plan, and many members were fearful about new American military entanglements. Tehran also denounced the plan, which it saw as part of a U.S. attempt to dominate the gulf.[16]

An even more ambitious plan surfaced during and immediately after the Gulf War. It envisioned a wider but looser Middle Eastern security arrangement that would include Israel, Turkey, and moderate Arab states headed by Egypt and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, with Iran perhaps playing a role as a regional balancer.[17] That idea has been floated in Washington in recent weeks as part of concerted lobbying efforts on the part of Jerusalem and Ankara, which are expected to become the twin pillars of the new organization. Having lost most of their strategic value to Washington at the end of the cold war, the two states are offering their services to help protect the pro-status quo Arab regimes in exchange for American military and financial aid. Israel would also want the Palestinian problem placed on the back burner in return for its renewed strategic role.[18]

### **Endemic Conflicts**

The problem is that Israel and the Arab states are not just nation-states striving for security. They represent powerful ideologies: Zionism and Pan-Arabism. Only a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem--the recognition on both sides of the other's legitimate rights in the land they share--can lead to a political accommodation between the two. A

political accommodation, and serious consideration of core issues such as the political legitimacy of existing regimes in the Middle East, can perhaps help the region move toward normal international relationships.[19] Without a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the danger exists that the most extreme nationalist and religious-fundamentalist groups on both sides will gain power and will lead the region toward an inevitable religious zero-sum-game conflict.

Until core political change occurs, the Middle East after the Gulf War will be the same Middle East, a place that is not hospitable to a new Wilsonian regional order with its search for democracy and "good guys." Instead, the region will be dominated by the old Hobbesian regional chaos--in which a mishmash of ethnic, religious, national, regional, and international players combines and divides in shifting alliances and conflicts. There, the United States finds itself operating in a kind of political and military kaleidoscope. Every turn of the kaleidoscope, like the Gulf War, creates new and unpredictable configurations.[20]

The cold war actually provided some stability to the region, with the superpowers' trying to tame their wild client-states. Since the end of the cold war, old regional rivalries have regained prominence. The Gulf War has probably helped crystallize those conflicts and even unleashed new revolutionary forces.

The United States could have decided to impose a Pax Americana on the region and to replace the long-defunct Ottoman Empire as a permanent hegemonic power in the Middle East. The decision not to send U.S. troops into Baghdad suggests that Washington is wary of such a grandiose goal. President Bush is less a new Wilson than a Rockefeller Republican whose goals are more limited: securing U.S. oil interests in the gulf. There is always the danger, however, that Bush will be carried away by his own idealistic rhetoric and by the expectations he is creating.

Bush's statements that America's "commitment to peace in the Middle East does not end with the liberation of Kuwait" and that he plans to build a new world order by working "tirelessly as a catalyst" for peace and change in the Middle East are exactly the kind of rhetoric that is bound to raise the stakes for the United States in the post-Gulf War Middle East.[21]

### **Washington on the Brink of Repeating Failed Policies**

The lessons of the Gulf War, particularly those of the diplomatic and military processes that led to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, are not found either at the "macro" level (e.g., the failure of Washington to prevent the break-down of the balance in the gulf) or at the "micro" level (e.g., the wrong signals that the Bush administration supposedly sent to Saddam on the eve of the invasion).[22]

Those who raise such arguments imply that the United States can now help restore the balance in the gulf and develop "a military balance such that no hostile state could dominate the region." Placing limitations on local military capabilities, creating regional security arrangements and arms control agreements, and more effective micromanagement of Middle Eastern diplomacy will supposedly deter the next Middle Eastern "bully" from threatening its neighbors.

The problem is that the rise of Saddam as a local bully was largely the outcome of the same policies that the current grand strategists are advocating. They again assume that a neat formula can secure regional balance in the area with limited military or financial costs for the United States, thereby eliminating the need for another large-scale American intervention.

Until the 1979 Iranian Revolution, U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf was based on an attempt to establish a regional balance of power among Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the other Arab oil states. In the early 1970s, while the United States was pursuing the Nixon Doctrine, American defense policy in the gulf rested on the twin towers of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The shah's Iran was expected to deter radical Iraq from realizing its aggressive intentions against Kuwait (a role played by Great Britain in the 1960s).

The costs to the United States and the American people were enormous. To help the shah and the Saudis build their military might, the Nixon administration encouraged a spiraling rise in the price of Middle Eastern oil. Increased costs led to the emergence of OPEC as an international economic power, to the traumatic oil and economic crises of the 1970s, and to the rise of the petro-military states of the region, which included Iraq and Libya in addition to Iran and

Saudi Arabia.

Those developments, in turn, helped create a major Middle Eastern crisis, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, that produced new and very risky American military and diplomatic commitments. They also created the conditions for the anti-shah and anti-American backlash inside Iran that culminated in the 1979 revolution and the birth of the Iranian regional bully, whom Washington was asked to contain, and eventually the bloody Iran-Iraq War.

The decision to strengthen Iraq in order to deter Iran, and the policies that followed--especially the decision that U.S. naval vessels would escort reflagged Kuwaiti tankers during the Iran-Iraq War--are examples of Washington's balance-of-power games in the region.[23]

Those policies were celebrated by the same analysts who later criticized the pro-Iraqi "tilt," who called for military action against Iraq, and who again advocate American restoration of regional balance. But the pro-Iraqi tilt was a natural outcome of the balance-of-power policies.[24] Trying to co-opt Iraq into the pro-American regional system and punishing Tehran made sense in the context of those policies. What was missing from the calculations was the realization that if the policies were pursued to their ultimate conclusion, they might eventually produce unpleasant results, such as the invasion of Kuwait, that would create extra costs for Washington.

### **The Real Lessons of the Gulf War**

The lessons of the Gulf War are not that the United States needs to more "effectively" restore the regional balance or to more efficiently micromanage U.S. ties with the regional players. The real lessons are different: being part of the Middle Eastern kaleidoscope entails heavy costs, which are unpredictable and certainly cannot be calculated in advance, for all the players, especially those, like the United States, who invest the most in the game. It is impossible to keep the kaleidoscope's configuration in place for long after a move, such as the U.S. victory in the Gulf War. Any player finds after a while that a positive outcome in one configuration (for example, Iraq containing Iran) can become negative in another configuration (for example, a strengthened Iraq invading Kuwait), which necessitates a new move (for example, the Gulf War). Hence, the Middle Eastern game is never ending, and Washington is bound to encounter new entanglements and higher costs. As it cuts one head off the hydra, Washington will see several new ones spring forth.

### **Dangerous Postwar Scenarios**

The defeat of Iraq by the United States has already pointed to possible new power configurations. The disintegration of Iraq (its "Balkanization" or "Lebanonization") could lead to a territorial struggle among Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Iran could try to set up an independent Iraqi Shi'ite regime in southern Iraq; Turkey could try to prevent an independent Kurdish republic in northern Iraq and to control the oil-rich Mosul area; and Syria might try to install a "brotherly" Ba'ath regime in Baghdad. Two of the three countries might go to war to prevent the third from achieving its goals.

Conversely, one cannot exclude the possibility of Saddam's regime remaining in power (supported informally by U.S. officials who want to prevent "Lebanonization" scenarios) and trying to form new coalitions with Syria or Iran, or both, against Israel or the Arab gulf states.[25] The heir to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, could renew its involvement (a development that the founder of the Turkish republic warned against but Washington encouraged during the Gulf War) and create new sources of regional instability. In addition to possible Turkish involvement in Iraq, long-standing territorial disputes between Ankara and Damascus could flare up. Those pressures could strengthen nationalist and expansionist voices in Ankara that call for establishing a "Greater Turkey," especially if, most analysts predict, the European Community continues to reject Ankara's bid for membership.

The radicalization of Jordan, another outcome of the Gulf War, will continue to put intense pressure on King Hussein to adopt a more anti-American and anti-Israeli stand, especially if American efforts fail to create the basis for Israeli-Palestinian peace. By creating expectations of possible diplomatic progress, Washington is only ensuring more disappointments and, as a result, more hostility toward it in case of failure.

Israeli Likud leaders could take advantage of a crisis in Jordan (which would probably manifest itself in increasing numbers of terrorist attacks against Israel from Jordanian territory) and try to fulfill their dream of establishing a

Palestinian republic on the eastern bank of the Jordan river, thereby removing the need to form an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Instead, Palestinians would be "encouraged" to emigrate to their new state across the river.

What will Washington do if one of those scenarios, or a combination of them, unfolds? It is not inconceivable that new commitments resulting from the Gulf War, combined with pressures from the Arab-oil and Israeli lobbies to contain a set of new villains (Iran? Syria? Syria and Iran?) and magnified by the notion that the Gulf War's results "prove" that Washington can play (with few costs) the role of international police officer, might lead the United States to a new intervention in the region.

After all, some would argue, after paying the costs of destroying one bad guy, do we really want to see another bad guy, say, President Assad of Syria, take advantage of our victory? Let's get rid of him so we can finally restore regional balance. The new American intervention can range from indirect nonmilitary aid, channeled by the Saudis, to support of various guerrilla groups "fighting for democracy" in Iraq, to direct U.S. military involvement in future regional conflicts.

### **The Illusion of Reliable Regional Surrogates**

Some suggest that an extensive U.S. military role can be avoided by creating a security arrangement in the gulf. Such an arrangement would combine military forces of the Arab gulf states and mercenary forces of Egypt (in exchange for Saudi financial aid for Egypt's bankrupted economy).

However, that security arrangement would be as stable as the shifting sands of Arabia and could actually create more long-term problems. The principal effect would be to foster the illusion in the United States and throughout the Arab world that Washington can ensure the security of the region without a large-scale military presence merely by maintaining a naval presence and keeping some military equipment there.

There are several problems with such an updated application of the Nixon Doctrine. Not only are there questions about Egypt's military capacity to maintain the balance of power in the gulf against the military forces of Syria, Iran, and Iraq, but Saudi Arabia has never previously welcomed a high-profile Egyptian role. Indeed, historically the two have been regional rivals (for example, supporting opposing sides in the Yemen War in the 1960s). Also, Egypt and Iraq are traditional rival power centers in the Middle East. The Egyptians might therefore join the wolves lurking in the corner to divide the Iraqi corpse, a development that would be against Saudi interests.[26]

Moreover, the optimistic expectation that the Saudis and other Arab gulf states will distinguish themselves in new generosity to Egypt (perhaps as part of a new Marshall Plan of economic development for the region, through which the wealthy oil states would help restructure the economies of the "have not" Arab states) reflects wishful thinking. The gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are experiencing a major financial crunch as a result of the high costs of the Gulf War and because their own economies need postwar reconstruction. For example, it has been reported that, for the first time, the Saudis are seeking a \$3.5 billion three-year loan from international banks.[27] The oil states will lack the resources to contribute large sums of money to support the Egyptian economy or to fund a major regional Marshall Plan. Those states, like other donors and financial institutions, also take a gloomy view of the socialized Egyptian economy.

Finally, the Saudis are aware that the Egyptian ally of today can become the rival of tomorrow and that the military machine they help build can turn against them. It is not inconceivable that the population explosion in Egypt and the inability of its government to feed its people could lead to the rise of a more radical regime in Cairo. The main target of that regime might become the well-to-do Arab ruling families of the gulf. The conservative gulf regimes will be understandably reluctant to risk using their own resources to create a new Frankenstein monster that one day might direct its resentment and frustration toward them. After all, the Saudis and Kuwaitis helped build Saddam's regime--with disastrous results.

### **Prospects for a Permanent U.S. Military Presence**

If Washington insists on maintaining a balance in the gulf that is favorable to the United States, no regional security

arrangement will be able to substitute for American military forces in dealing with various contingencies, especially protection of the Arab gulf states. That mission could lead to more Pentagon spending and plans to improve U.S. "long-reach" military capabilities in the region. Such steps would certainly entail maintaining a rapid deployment capability and perhaps even continuing a peacetime presence of ground troops.

Such a development would go beyond the "over the horizon" type of U.S. presence currently envisioned. It would be more politically costly for the United States in terms of support at home, and it might actually undermine the legitimacy of traditional regimes in the gulf. One major outcome of the Gulf War, therefore, would not be the rise of a viable regional security organization but an increasing commitment of the United States to direct defense of Arab oil states, and a growing dependency of the latter on Washington.

Indeed, some U.S. officials are already suggesting that the administration will favor permanently stationing ground troops in Saudi Arabia and other gulf states as part of joint security arrangements with the Arab nations. As a first step, the Pentagon is planning to establish the forward headquarters of the U.S. Central Command in Bahrain. The American contingent would be of brigade size (about 3,000 troops), and its mission would include joint planning and training with Arab ground forces for responding to a military crisis. "Cheney feels and Powell feels that you have to leave something there," indicated one official, who hinted that agreements to station ground forces in the region will be signed with other countries in the region.[28] Moves in that direction were made during Cheney's visit to the gulf in early May.

American officials have expressed the hope that after the Gulf War, Washington's Arab allies will rely less on diplomacy and more on strong military deterrence. But with the removal of the Arab League as a forum for managing intra-Arab conflicts, the region's states lost another incentive for managing their own interests through a regional mechanism. They also lack both the military power and the political will to form an independent regional security structure. As a result of the war, the United States will become a more active player, an external balancer, that is drawn into the kaleidoscopic balance-of-power games of the region at growing military and diplomatic costs.

### **Putting the Arms Control Cart before the Political Horse**

Encouraging regional arms control arrangements, especially on weapons of mass destruction, has even less chance of succeeding than does structuring regional defense pacts. Comprehensive approaches to regional arms control would have to encompass a large number of states with varying capabilities and motives--a most difficult prospect. Moreover, although arms control agreements reflect and at the same time contribute to changes in the political environment, they cannot substitute for those changes. If one assumes that the Middle East will continue to be a center of unpredictable political rivalry, it is probable that to secure their fragile margin of security, the region's states will continue to build their military machines, especially at a time when the sources of arms are not exactly drying up. The Gulf War has opened a new cycle of regional military build-up, led by the champion of Middle Eastern arms control, the United States.

Iraq's arsenal of advanced weapons suffered a terrible blow in the war. However, Operation Desert Storm did nothing to reduce Middle Eastern armies' appetites for tanks, smart bombs, missiles, sophisticated aircraft, and other weapons. In his testimony before Congress on February 6, 1991, Secretary of State Baker described the administration's tentative vision of a postwar Middle East and declared that one important challenge to the United States would be to help stop the flow of deadly arms to the region and to achieve "effective arms control and prevent proliferation of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction." Reflecting a growing bipartisan view on Capitol Hill, House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.) said, "A worldwide moratorium on arms sales to the Middle East is worth serious consideration." [29]

### **The Administration's Ambivalence toward Arms Control**

Politics and business interests will make progress toward arms control difficult. Indeed, during his appearance before a joint session of Congress, President Bush pointedly omitted conventional arms control from his list of four objectives for the postwar Middle East, suggesting that if the administration has to choose between its perceived political and strategic interests in the area and the elusive notion of arms control, the former will take precedence.

Not only did the administration decide to leave conventional weapons off its arms control agenda for the region, but immediately after the gulf cease-fire, it asked Congress to approve the sale of 46 F-16 fighter jets to Egypt at a price of \$1.6 billion. That was the first in the series of huge arms deals that the administration plans to sign with its Arab friends, Turkey, and Israel. Such deals will produce a new cycle of the arms race. The administration has already indicated that it is considering \$18 million in arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and Turkey, a move that will stimulate requests by Israel for similar deals.

### **Factors Promoting Arms Proliferation**

The lesson that Israel and America's gulf allies are likely to draw from the conflict is that their security rests on acquiring more, not fewer, high-tech weapons. Hence, if one takes into consideration the strong regional demand for conventional and unconventional weapons and the existence of old and new sources of supply (such as the American and West European arms industries that are searching for new markets; the expanding arms businesses of North Korea, Brazil, Czechoslovakia, and Poland; and Israel's independent, advanced defense industry), one does not have to be an expert in the international arms market to predict a new and more destructive regional arms race.

Europe's bloated arms makers will be the main obstacle to any arms control agreement. France's defense industry relies on significant export sales to the Middle East to achieve economies of scale. Hungary and other former Warsaw Pact states have a stock of Soviet-made arms that they would like to exchange for hard currency. And Third World exporters such as China would also like to play a role in the Middle Eastern arms bazaar.

It is possible that Washington and some European governments will attempt to impose legal constraints on and to expand their inspection of arms sales and technology transfers to Iraq (whose military industry they helped to build). There is some discussion of erecting new export restraints on chemical and biological agents and production equipment. Washington is also pushing to expand the role of the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls, which has a mandate to restrict the flow of military technology to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[30] Others discuss the idea of a separate agency to monitor arms exports to the Third World, especially to the Middle East. Washington might also try to coax Israel and its Arab neighbors into taking steps such as agreeing to notify each other in advance of major military exercises and missile test launches.[31]

However, it will be impossible, even with the best intentions (assuming they exist), to curtail arms sales to the region in the long run. The complex and secretive arms trade environment and the availability of billions of petro-dollars on the demand side virtually guarantee continued activity. The cooling of U.S.-Soviet relations as a result of the Gulf War and the new repression in the Soviet Union makes it difficult to envision Moscow's extensive cooperation in new Middle East arms control efforts. Israel, Turkey, and the moderate Arab states will request more weapons to defend themselves against "new Saddams," and Washington, pressured by Israeli and Arab lobbies and encouraged by the now-rejuvenated military-industrial complex, will find it difficult not to provide those weapons.

As far as weapons of mass destruction are concerned, the Gulf War made it possible for Israel to regain its regional nuclear monopoly. No Israeli leader, even a moderate Labor leader, will give up what most Israelis consider the nation's "weapon of last resort" or open Israel's nuclear program to international inspection, as the Egyptians have demanded as part of their proposal for a Middle Eastern unconventional-weapons-free zone. Notwithstanding Israel's own proposal for a nuclear-weapons-free zone for the Middle East (which is more a public relations gimmick than a serious policy proposal), the only incentive for Israel to begin reducing its nuclear arsenal would be another regional power's acquisition of nuclear weapons in the context of a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Ironically, by destroying Iraq's capability to produce nonconventional weapons, Washington probably has helped retard progress toward a nuclear "balance of terror" between Israel and Iraq that might have given Jerusalem an incentive to move (as part of regional political negotiations) in the direction of nonconventional arms control agreements.

In the long run, neither Washington nor Israel can prevent the gulf states from gaining more access to technology that will enable them to develop nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. Such development could actually lend stability to the relationships among gulf states in the same way that the nuclear threat is apparently helping to prevent a military confrontation in the Indian-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir.[32]

Ultimately, only political settlements of Middle Eastern conflicts and creation of greater regional stability will give rise to an environment conducive to discussions on ending the arms race. Such discussions would be the political horse that would pull the cart of arms control.

### **Finally, an American-Made Israeli-Palestinian Peace?**

When it comes to dealing with the kaleidoscopic problems of the Middle East, Washington's power to reshape the region and to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be extremely limited. Actually, the higher the expectations, the greater the disappointments.

Even before the Gulf War, Washington hoped that the then-prevailing "end-of-history" era would produce an Israeli de Klerk and a Palestinian Mandela. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir's "peace plan" and the Palestine Liberation Organization's recognition of Israel were seized on by the "peace process" buffs in Washington as an excuse for renewing hyperactive American diplomacy in the Middle East.[33]

However, both Shamir and PLO leader Yasir Arafat lacked the political interest or the will to produce substantive proposals. Their moves were exercises in buying time, attempts to placate allies and to target American public opinion. They hoped that eventually something would happen--as it always does in the Middle East--that could serve as a pretext for new hard-line policies. And something did happen--the invasion of Kuwait. In the Israeli-Palestinian zero-sum-game, Shamir defeated Arafat. Shamir, along with Iran and Syria, has emerged as a big winner from the Gulf War.[34]

### **Factors Promoting Peace Efforts**

The conventional wisdom in Washington now is that the bulldozer of the new international order will roll from Kuwait toward Jerusalem, and that the same level of American power that was exerted by President Bush in the military arena to push Saddam out of Kuwait will now be used on the diplomatic front to pressure Shamir to withdraw from the West Bank.

Other forces will also push in that direction. The Palestinian have lost the moral high ground; they bet on the losing side in the Gulf War. But the Palestinian problem is still perceived as at least a dangerous irritant. The radicalization of Jordan, exemplified by unprecedented anti-American sentiment emanating from Amman, points to the power of a desperate and articulate national community to try to sabotage American designs in the region.

More important, it has been argued that the linkage that Saddam promised the Palestinians will now be delivered by Arab members of the anti-Saddam coalition. Israel also earned "brownie points" by the restraint it exhibited during the war, but the Arab members of the coalition scored higher in the overall American strategic calculations. Those countries are therefore likely to have more leverage over Washington in the postwar period.

In addition, the Soviets and the Europeans have already indicated that they expect Washington to try to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The use of the United Nations as a diplomatic instrument during the Gulf War will raise demands that President Bush use the power of the international community to put pressure on Israel to comply with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which call for the exchange of the Israeli-occupied Arab territories for peace. Otherwise, Bush will be accused of applying a double standard to Iraqi-held Kuwait and the Israeli-controlled West Bank. The media will certainly create a major momentum for continuing the Middle East peace process show. And Bush, as a very popular president, may feel that he has the political clout to push for a Palestinian-Israeli agreement.[35]

### **Daunting Obstacles to Peace**

Several factors will push in the other direction, however. First, the poisonous relationship between the two communities after the war is certainly not going to produce the Israeli de Klerk and the Palestinian Mandela that Washington was seeking before the war.

With the political defeat of the PLO, there is really no Palestinian leadership that can deliver a diplomatic solution. The

Likud government wants Americans to believe that somewhere out there hides Mr. Palestinian Moderate, waiting for Arafat to disappear so he can sit down for talks with Israel about how to manage the sewerage system on the West Bank and similar cosmetic issues--the so-called autonomy plan. The reality is quite different.

Even before the war, public opinion polls indicated that the fundamentalist Hamas movement could win a majority of votes in the Gaza Strip and do well even in the more secular West Bank urban centers. The war probably radicalized the urban Palestinian population, and in any case, the Israeli government is doing its best to suppress those relatively moderate voices. For example, Israel jailed the Palestinian leader Professor Sari Nusseibah for allegedly spying for Iraq. Waiting for Mr. Palestinian Moderate is an exercise in futility.

On the Israeli side is a government headed by two leaders, Shamir and Defense Minister Moshe Arens, who voted against the Camp David Agreements; by two other ministers, Ariel Sharon and Rafael Eitan, who were the architects of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon; and by a recent addition to the cabinet, Rehavam Ze'evi, who calls for the "transfer" (expulsion) of the Palestinians. Moreover, an Israeli public, traumatized by the war and horrified by scenes of Palestinians cheering Saddam's missile attacks on Israel, will be less inclined to support major concessions.

Shamir and his Likud party are committed ideologically to Israel's permanent political control of the West Bank and Gaza. The debate between the Likud leaders is over tactics to achieve that goal, not the strategy of annexation itself. In the eyes of many Israelis, Shamir was vindicated for standing up to American pressure to talk to the PLO before the war. He will continue to do more of the same--to stall, to buy time--until any American initiative fizzles as the 1992 presidential campaign approaches.[36] Israeli doves, who have been losing political power, hope that American pressure on Shamir will help to shift the political balance in Israel in their favor. They may receive a surprise as they face the second obstacle to Bush's peace bulldozer. In the short run, at least, the Bush administration will not be under serious pressure by the Arab members of the coalition (or by anyone else for that matter) to move forcefully on the Palestinian issue.

Since Arafat's support for Saddam during the war, the Arab gulf states have not hidden their hostility toward the PLO and its leader; the Syrians have traditionally been antagonistic toward the PLO leadership. Hence, one can expect that Arab members of the coalition will concentrate in the coming months on reconstructing their economies and building their military forces and that they will maintain only a semblance of interest in the Palestinian issue. They are aware that any serious move on the diplomatic front can create tensions with the United States and harm their existing *modus vivendi* with Israel without producing any major political dividends for them. (That attitude could change in the long run if those regimes face growing domestic unrest, in which case the Israeli issue would become the ideal distraction.)

### **"Benign Neglect" of the Palestinian-Israeli Dispute?**

Since 1948 the driving force behind U.S. efforts to reach peace between Israel and the Arabs has been the desire to bridge the gap between U.S. interests in the Arab gulf states and the moral commitment of the United States to Israel. Indeed, finding a way to solve the Arab-Israeli-Persian Gulf "linkage" problem has dominated U.S. policies toward the area.

### **Implications of the Gulf War for Israel**

The Gulf War brought some bad news to Israel: its role as an alleged strategic asset became irrelevant because all its American-financed military might could not serve U.S. interests in the gulf. Those interests were supported instead by the military efforts of the American-Arab coalition. Israel actually became in some measure a strategic liability to Washington: Israel's possible entry into the war threatened the coalition's unity. Washington even had to divert air power resources from the Kuwaiti theater of operation to Western Iraq to deal with Scud missile threats to Israel.

But at the same time, there was good news for the Likud government, at least in the short run: Washington was able to form a pro-America Arab coalition and to defend its interests in the gulf without solving the Palestinian problem.

That major development will temporarily make the Palestinian problem less urgent. Through its military action in the gulf, Washington sought to take care of its strategic and economic interests, basically by sending a message to future bullies that it will intervene militarily to defend the Arab gulf states. With the linkage between the Palestinian problem

and American interests in the gulf so weakened now, U.S. officials may wonder why they should invest diplomatic time and energy to resolve a conflict between two adversaries, the Israelis and the Palestinians, who do not seem to be interested in taking advantage of such American efforts.

After considering the domestic political costs involved in any Middle Eastern peace process, the competing international problems that arise after establishment of a security arrangement in the gulf, and other factors, one can predict that the Bush bulldozer may turn into a slow-moving truck that will get stuck somewhere on the roads between Jerusalem, Amman, and Cairo.

The Likud government, interested in downplaying the Israeli-Palestinian issue, has requested that the Arab states reach separate peace agreements with the Jewish state before any move on that issue can occur. The Bush administration, responding to pressure from Jerusalem, has adopted a modified version of that idea. Washington proposes a two-track approach: simultaneous efforts [1] to achieve a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and [2] to reach peace agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors, especially between Jerusalem and Damascus.

A pure balance-of-power model indicates that it would be logical for Israel and Syria to make peace. With its patron, the Soviet Union, weakened and starving for economic aid, Syria might see peace with Israel as a way of opening channels to the West. That move might result in an informal agreement between the two remaining military powers in the Fertile Crescent: scratch our backs and allow us to suppress the Lebanese; we'll scratch your back and allow you to suppress the Palestinians.

That arrangement might work in a nonideological, Congress of Vienna type of system. But although Assad and Shamir might be Machiavellian, they are also fanatic nationalists. Will Assad, following the model of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, accept less than a full and complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights? Will Shamir accept even a partial withdrawal?[37]

In the short run we might see further development of a modus vivendi that exists informally between Israel and Syria. But the chances for a peace agreement between those two countries, or between Israel and the Arab gulf states, is slim despite early expectations after the war. In the long run, a military confrontation seems a more realistic development than does a peace agreement in the Israeli-Syrian relationship.

### **The Perverse Effects of American Activism**

Those possible developments, which reflect the limited American power to affect Arab-Israeli relationships and the increasing irrelevancy of those relationships to American interests, should lead to a reassessment of the hyperactive American diplomatic approach toward Arab-Israeli peace. The activist approach has been based on a perverted assumption: Washington should pay the financial and diplomatic costs of helping Arabs and Israelis to stop killing each other, since by so doing they are supposedly doing more of a favor for the United States than for themselves.

That assumption derived from Washington's Middle Eastern policy paradigm, which assumed that unless Americans helped make peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, there would be several unpleasant results. First, Washington, as a result of Arab resentments, would find it difficult to safeguard Western oil and strategic interests in the gulf. Second, the United States would endanger its moral commitment to Israel, since that state's security can be guaranteed in the long run only by recognition and acceptance by its neighbors. Finally, U.S. failure to secure peace would produce regional instability that would invite Soviet meddling and expansionism.

The end of the cold war has largely eliminated the third factor from the overall American calculation, although Washington will have to recognize the legitimate Soviet interests in Moscow's Middle Eastern geopolitical back yard and should not exclude the Soviets from regional diplomatic efforts. As noted, the Gulf War at least weakened, if not removed, the first factor: the linkage between the Arab-Israeli issue and American interests in the gulf.[38]

Continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza raises major questions about the second element in America's Middle Eastern paradigm: Washington's moral commitment to the Jewish state. American support and aid keep a repressive militant government and a bankrupt socialist economy in Jerusalem. If Israel wants to maintain American public support, which was based on the argument that Israel is a democratic nation and is different from the

surrounding Arab authoritarian and dictatorial regimes, it will have no future choice (in its own interest) but to decouple itself from the occupied Arab territories, reach some modus vivendi with its Arab neighbors, and reform its political and economic systems. Then it could focus on its real challenge--the absorption of hundreds of thousands of Soviet-Jewish immigrants. Israel could become a major trading state, a kind of a Middle Eastern Singapore.

By perpetuating its Middle Eastern paradigm, Washington is actually removing incentives for diplomatic and economic changes on both the Israeli and the Arab sides. Washington's high-profile involvement in trying to bring peace between Arabs and Israelis creates the impression that the diplomatic stakes in solving the conflict are higher for Washington than for the regional adversaries--that it owes them diplomatic support or financial compensation if they are willing to make concessions. The United States also ends up a party to domestic political battles in the Middle East as Israelis and Arabs opposed to its moves begin to direct their frustration against Washington. Moreover, by creating the expectation that it can deliver a solution, the United States is bound to produce an eventual backlash when its commitments to each side are not fulfilled.

### **Needed: Policy of Benign Neglect**

Washington should consider a new approach: an attitude of neglect toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the kind of attitude it has adopted toward other regional conflicts such as that between India and Pakistan. That approach might actually persuade more Israelis and Palestinians that unless they move seriously to solve their conflict they will be the ones to bear the costs of their own intransigence.[39]

The Palestinians will remain under Israeli control for the foreseeable future. Notwithstanding the usual solidarity rhetoric of their Arab brothers, the Palestinians and their problem will be marginalized regionally and internationally in the same way that the lack of a Kurdish homeland in the Middle East has gone unremedied.

Israel will retain the burden of occupation in the midst of a bloody communal conflict with the Palestinians, will lose the Western support it gained during the Gulf War, and will be unable to take care of its rising economic and social problems, particularly the absorption of Soviet-Jewish immigrants.

One main reason that American mediation between Egypt and Israel was successful in the late 1970s was that both Cairo and Jerusalem were willing from the outset, even without American intervention, to accept the land-for-peace formula as a basis for solving their conflict. Washington should be ready to help the Israelis and the Palestinians only when they are ready to help themselves, and then it should offer its services only as a mediator and an honest broker. In contrast to its conduct during the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, the United States should avoid either creating undue expectations about its ability to deliver a solution or making a commitment to pay the two sides for agreeing to settle their differences.

### **America's No-Win Strategy**

It is doubtful that Washington will soon adopt such a benign neglect approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict or a more disengaged policy toward the Middle East in general. The Gulf War weakened the forces in the foreign policy establishment who were interested in seeing the United States divert resources from its military and restructure its economy for more effective participation in international economic competition. The "splendid little war" played into the hands of members of the military-industrial complex who want to see Washington play the role of a global police officer and extend its military commitments in various parts of the globe, especially the Middle East.

True, the chilly response Washington received from both Israelis and Arabs when it tried to revive the peace process is leading the Bush administration to adopt a more low-key approach. But domestic and international pressures will make it difficult for the administration to let go in the Middle East.

Pressure from pro-Israel members of Congress will make it impossible for the administration to cut any economic or military aid to Israel. However, continued support for the Likud government, especially if the intifada flares up again, will antagonize Arab members of the U.S.-led Middle East coalition. Coalition members will demand that Bush do something to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

At the same time, massive arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other Arab allies will create the usual tensions between the president and Congress, with the latter demanding an increase in military support for Israel. The Jewish state's supporters in Washington have also begun a public relations campaign against Syria, demanding that Washington attempt to isolate Damascus diplomatically. Even if the administration rejects that advice, the anti-Syrian public campaign is bound to produce tensions between the United States and Syria.

Moreover, Washington will ultimately begin to feel the regional political repercussions of the Gulf War. Middle Eastern societies have always exhibited delayed reactions to domestic and regional crises. For example, it was several years after Israel's establishment in 1948 that dramatic political changes in the Arab world, including the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, took place. The Arab defeat in 1967 did not produce immediate repercussions. They emerged only in the early 1970s in the form of PLO terrorism, the 1973 war, and the oil embargo.

The continuing socioeconomic problems of the Arab world, coupled with growing hostility toward Washington because of its support for Israel and its war against Iraq, could lead in a few years to a similar delayed reaction to the Gulf War. We might even see a surge of "Saddamism," a combination of Arab radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism, that might outlive Saddam himself. The United States and the Arab regimes that supported it during the war would then face something akin to a regional anti-American intifada in the form of growing threats against American citizens and interests plus increasing threats to pro-American governments in the Middle East.

American neoconservatives, reflecting the pro-Likud line of the day, will argue that an anti-American Middle Eastern intifada proves that the West Bank issue is a side show and that the United States and the West as a whole now face a political, cultural, and military conflict with a new global threat: the forces of Arab radicalism and Moslem fundamentalism. Neoconservatives will identify Palestinian nationalism with the new Arab-Moslem bogeyman in the same way that they succeeded in tying it to the Soviet-sponsored terrorism network in the 1980s. Then they will suggest that Israel can again serve as a strategic asset against radicalism in the region: Israel will be the Middle Eastern neighborhood cop assisting the United States, the global policeman.[40]

Members of the Arab-oil lobby will try to frame the developments in a different manner and will echo the arguments made by leaders of the moderate Arab regimes. Their thesis will be that the source of the regional anti-American intifada is the continuing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; if only Washington could pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and agree to establish an independent Palestinian state, then peace and stability would arrive in the Middle East. Unless Washington takes that step, they will argue, its oil and strategic interests in the gulf will again be threatened and new Saddams, thriving politically on the festering Palestinian problem, will come to power.

The Bush administration will again find itself in a no-win situation. Following neoconservative, pro-Israeli advice will only strengthen anti-American attitudes in the Arab and Moslem worlds and may draw Washington into a diplomatic or even a military confrontation with Israel's new threat, the new Saddam, Syria's Assad. That will only help to increase the power of the militant Likud government with its annexationist agenda and its long-term plan of replacing Jordan with a Palestinian state. Israel and its supporters will then be able to increase funding for the American entitlement program for Israel, thus creating no incentives for diplomatic flexibility and economic reform in that country.[41]

Following the pro-Arab line will lead to a growing conflict with Israel (with destructive domestic political consequences) without any guarantee that exerting pressure on the Jewish state will cause the establishment of a Palestinian state or secure American interests in the region. Unable to "deliver Israel," Washington might then face growing antagonism from both sides.

The best-case scenario for the Israeli and Arab-oil lobbies would be one in which American interests in the region converged in opposition to a threat to both Israel and the moderate Arab regimes, as was the case with Saddam Hussein. Short of that, Washington will find itself trying to juggle its policies in response to pressures from Jerusalem and from pro-American Arab capitals. Those pressures will lead Washington to make new diplomatic and financial commitments in an attempt to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as with other sources of domestic and regional instability.

## **Toward a New U.S. Middle East Policy**

It is essential to resist such pressures and to create a new U.S. policy. Soon the discrepancy between the growing diplomatic and military costs of U.S. regional commitments and the meager benefits to the United States will become apparent. At that point, more Americans will begin to search for more attractive policies. One important change should be to begin shifting more security and economic responsibilities in the region to other parties--especially the European Community.

Americans have been complaining about Europe's free-rider position in the gulf, that is, its lack of willingness to pay the costs of containing security threats there. However, Europeans respond by suggesting that there is no taxation without representation and that they also want to share in making decisions about the Middle East.

Since the victory in the Gulf War, Europe seems willing to accept American leadership in the region. However, as Washington faces increasing diplomatic and military problems in shaping security arrangements in the gulf and in maintaining the Israeli-Arab peace momentum, new acrimonies between the United States and Great Britain on the one hand and the rest of Europe (particularly the Mediterranean states--France, Italy, and Spain) on the other will resurface.

France would like to play a more independent security role in the region, perhaps as part of a new military undertaking of the Western European Union, which would put Paris in conflict with Washington and London, who want any European "out of area" security policy firmly anchored in an American-led NATO. Italy and Spain, with French support, have begun pushing their plan for establishment of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean European states with their geographic, economic, demographic, and cultural ties with the Middle East and North Africa have been stressing the need to deal with the Palestinian issue as part of an international conference on the Middle East, an idea that has not been received with great enthusiasm in Washington and London. France also indicated that the PLO should play an important role in any Middle Eastern peace process. The disagreements over those issues are bound to become more apparent, especially if Israeli opposition to withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza becomes obvious.[42]

Washington should welcome the possibility that France and the European Community will return to play a more active diplomatic and military role. And Washington should be prepared, if asked by all sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict, to offer its diplomatic services as an honest broker, while making it clear to both Arabs and Israelis that such a move will depend on their willingness to reach an agreement. Furthermore, it should be clearly understood that the United States will not be willing to incur major financial costs or to undertake military commitments in the region as part of a final peace agreement.

Similarly, the United States should be willing to help the gulf countries and other Middle Eastern states adopt free-market systems and establish free-trade areas. The American private sector can help Middle Eastern businesses help themselves by encouraging Western investment, improving marketing techniques, and providing training programs to facilitate entrepreneurial activity.

While democratic values may be alien to the political cultures of the Middle East, respect for the traditional market, the bazaar, is not. The expansion of islands of free enterprise in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan can strengthen the existing business community in those countries as well as the power of the young professional middle class. Those segments of society tend to be more westernized and pragmatic in their political orientation and could eventually serve as a counterweight to both the decaying military regimes and the rising fundamentalist groups. Even here, American expectations must be realistic; the effort, therefore, should be low key and modest in nature.

The United States should refrain from entering a new cycle of military commitment and diplomatic hyperactivity, which would lead political elites in the region to look to Washington to solve their domestic and political problems and to contain regional threats. By renewing military and diplomatic commitments, the United States would remove the incentives for those regimes to reform their political and economic systems, to create stable balance-of-power systems and viable security arrangements, and to reach diplomatic solutions to their conflicts. Instead of becoming a symbol of political and economic freedom (a model to be imitated), the United States would be identified with repressive regimes

and become a symbol of evil in the eyes of new, rising elites. Washington would also risk becoming a party to regional conflicts and being drawn into one military intervention after another.

Indeed, as the Bush administration is learning in the aftermath of the Gulf War, a successful military operation did not produce a neat strategic solution to regional balance-of-power problems. Instead, it has created new dilemmas for American policy. Washington would like to see Saddam go, one official was quoted as saying, but "we have no desire to see Iraq splinter into its many constituent parts. And so it's tough to know what, if anything, to do in the current situation." [43] Bush and his advisers are discovering that getting into the gulf crisis was easier than getting out. [44] Typical of the problem is the anger expressed by one Iraqi exile leader who blames the United States for the chaos and destruction of the war and calls on Washington to invade Baghdad and impose democracy. If Washington refuses to take that step, he warns, "the Middle East will be worse than it was before the war in spite of the demise of Saddam Hussein." Moreover, "the Arabs will remember the war as having been simply about destroying Iraq," and there will be "a legacy of hate and bitterness" against the United States for generations to come. [45]

Instead of letting itself be lured into such a morass, the United States should seize the opportunity provided by the end of the cold war and the completion of the Gulf War to replace its decaying Middle Eastern paradigm with a more cautious approach toward the region. Washington should maintain friendly relationships with Middle Eastern countries that share its values and should increase its economic ties with those who want to trade. But the United States cannot hope to impose stability on that fractious region or to solve its multifaceted problems.

## Notes

[1] Discussions of some of those ideas include Lisa Beyer, "The Future: Now, Winning the Peace," *Time*, March 11, 1991, pp. 46-48; Laurie Mylroie, "We Should Mind Iraq's Business," *New York Times*, March 7, 1991.

[2] See, for example, *Restoring the Balance: U.S. Strategy and the Gulf Crisis* (Washington: Washington Institute, Strategic Study Group, 1991). For less ambitious grand designs, see Michael Collins Dunn, "We Can Achieve Our Objectives If We Define Them Clearly," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, January 1991, p. 12; Shireen T. Hunter, "Ingredients for Stability," *Middle East International*, February 22, 1991, pp. 18-19.

[3] For an analysis of American reconstruction policies in Europe and Japan, see Richard Barnet, *The Alliance: America-Europe-Japan--Makers of the Postwar World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

[4] For a discussion of the political crisis of the Arab world, see Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[5] Jean P. Sasson, *The Rape of Kuwait* (New York: Knightsbridge, 1991).

[6] See David E. Long and Bernard Reich, eds., *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986); Samuel F. Wells, Jr., and Mark Bruzonsky, *Security in the Middle East: Regional Change and Great Power Strategies* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987).

[7] See Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 1991); Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1991).

[8] Chris Hedges, "In Growing Disarray, Iraqis Fight Iraqis," *New York Times*, March 10, 1991, p. A1.

[9] Jonathan C. Randal, "Iraqi Opposition Avoids Selecting Overall Leaders," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1991, p. A13. For a call for American intervention to support democracy in Iraq, see Jim Hoagland, "Back Democracy in Iraq," *Washington Post*, February 26, 1991, op-ed page.

[10] Al Kamen and R. Jeffrey Smith, "Desire to See Saddam Overthrown Tempered by Concern over Upheaval," *Washington Post*, March 8, 1991, p. A24.

- [11] Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Sees Hussein Close to Victory Over Shi'ite Foes," *New York Times*, March 26, 1991, p. A1; Andrew W. Rosenthal, "U.S. Fearing Iraqi Breakup, Is Said to Rule Out Action to Aid Anti-Hussein Rebels," *New York Times*, March 27, 1991, p. A1.
- [12] David Hoffman and Caryle Murphy, "Kuwaitis Weigh Rebirth of a Nation," *Washington Post*, March 10, 1991, p. A1; "Kuwaitis, Feeling Sense of Betrayal, Ponder Future Ties with Palestinians," *Washington Post*, March 9, 1991, p. A18.
- [13] Michael Kramer, "Kuwait: Chaos and Revenge," *Time*, March 18, 1991, pp. 28-35; Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Kuwaiti Cabinet, Widely Assailed, Quits," *New York Times*, March 21, 1991, p. A15; John Kifner, "Emir Disparaged at Kuwaiti Forums," *New York Times*, March 27, 1991, p. A8. For a revealing analysis of the nature of Kuwait's ruling elite, see Christopher Dickey, "Kuwait, Inc.," *Vanity Fair*, November 1990.
- [14] On human rights conditions in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Arab World, see those portions of the State Department's 1990 Human Rights Report quoted in *Near East Report*, February 15, 1991, p. 31. For a critical view of Saudi politics, see J. B. Kelly, *Arabia: The Gulf and the West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980). For a more sympathetic view, see Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Saud* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981).
- [15] Examples include Ben Wattenberg, *The First Universal Nation* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1991).
- [16] For a discussion of Baker's proposal, see "Afterwards, in the Middle East, May Resemble Before," *The Economist*, October 6, 1990, pp. 45-46.
- [17] That is the outline of the initial report of the Washington Institute's Strategic Study Group. Although its authors emphasize that a Middle Eastern security arrangement cannot be modeled after NATO, that is exactly what they propose (p. 22).
- [18] The Washington correspondent of the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* has detailed Israeli-Turkish cooperative lobbying efforts to increase military aid for the two countries in exchange for their aid to American war efforts in the gulf. *Ha'aretz*, weekly international edition, February 29, 1991, p. 1. See also Clyde Haberman, "Turks Claim Some of Victors' Spoils," *New York Times*, March 13, 1991; Leon T. Hadar, "Israel: Accumulating Brownie Points and Waiting for the Post-War Scenario," *World & I*, April 1991.
- [19] Leon T. Hadar, "Israel, the United States, and the Persian Gulf Crisis," paper presented to a forum sponsored by the Middle East Institute and the World Affairs Council in Washington, D.C., March 4, 1991.
- [20] For an analytical-historical model of Middle Eastern politics as a kaleidoscope, see L. Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).
- [21] Maureen Dowd, "Bush Proclaiming Victory, Seeks Wider Mideast Peace; Hints at Pressure on Israel," *New York Times*, March 7, 1991, p. A1.
- [22] See, for example, Paul Gigot, "Iraq: An American Screw-Up," *National Interest*, (Winter 1990-91): 3-10; Don Oberdorfer, "Missed Signals in the Middle East," *Washington Post Magazine*, March 17, 1991.
- [23] See Leon T. Hadar, "The Arab Gulf States," *Journal of Defense and Diplomacy* (January 1988): 46-50; idem, "Saudi Arabia's Defense Forces," *Journal of Defense and Diplomacy* (October 1987): 42-45.
- [24] See Laurie Mylroie, "The Baghdad Alternative," *Orbis* 32, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 339-54. In the *Orbis* article Mylroie recommended that Washington use Saddam as a new strategic asset to contain Iran. During the more recent gulf crisis, she published several articles and coauthored a book in which she recommended American military action against Iraq.

[25] Such threatening scenarios are described in R. W. Apple, Jr., "Another Gulf War?" *New York Times*, March 10, 1991, p. A16.

[26] For the problems that might be involved in assigning a security role in the gulf to the Egyptian military, see Leon T. Hadar, "The Egyptian Armed Forces," *Journal of Defense and Diplomacy* (October 1988): 40-47; "Winning the Peace: A Stable Mideast Will Be Harder to Achieve Than Military Victory," *Business Week*, March 11, 1991, pp. 24-27. For an analysis of expectations about a wider American security role in the gulf, see Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Plans a Bigger Presence in the Gulf," *New York Times*, March 3, 1991, p. A19.

[27] See "The Prospects for the Saudi Arabian Economy in the Wake of the Gulf War," *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, March 25, 1991, pp. 2-5.

[28] Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. and Bahrain Near Pact on Permanent Military Base," *New York Times*, March 25, 1991, p. A9.

[29] Quoted in "Shut Down the Mideast Arms Bazaar? Forget It," *Business Week*, March 11, 1991, p. 28.

[30] On obstacles facing any arms control agreements in the region, see Don Oberdorfer and R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Faces Contradiction on Mideast Arms Control," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1991; Patrick E. Tyler, "As the Dust Settles, Attention Turns to New Arms Sales," *New York Times*, March 24, 1991, p. E3.

[31] "Shut Down the Mideast Arms Bazaar?"

[32] For an Israeli study proposing nuclear proliferation in the Middle East as a way of strengthening stability there, see Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence: A Strategy for the 1980's* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[33] For pre-Gulf War Middle Eastern peace efforts, see Leon T. Hadar, "Reforming Israel--Before It's Too Late," *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1990-91): 106-27.

[34] See Thomas L. Friedman, "U.S. Gives Israel \$650 Million to Offset Its Costs in Gulf War," *New York Times*, March 6, 1991, p. A1.

[35] See, for example, Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Displays 'Power on a Large Scale,'" *Washington Post*, March 3, 1991, p. A31, regarding Bush's diplomatic power after the war.

[36] On the Likud's postwar strategy, see Peretz Kidron, "A Facade of Unity," *Middle East International*, February 21, 1991, pp. 11-13.

[37] On ideas for bilateral peace agreements between Israel and the Arab states, see Craig R. Whitney, "The Next Step Will Be Building a Solid Future on the Shifting Sands," *New York Times*, March 3, 1991, p. E3; Robert S. Greenberger, "Saudis' View of Israel Softens, but Kingdom May Back Away," *Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 1991, p. A4.

[38] The point is raised by Leslie Gelb, "A New Mideast Balance," *New York Times*, March 6, 1991, p. A25.

[39] An earlier application of this idea is discussed in Leon T. Hadar, "Creating a U.S. Policy of Constructive Disengagement in the Middle East," *Cato Institute Policy Analysis* no. 125, December 29, 1989.

[40] See Leon T. Hadar, "The 'Neocons': From the Cold War to the 'Global Intifada,'" *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, April 1991.

[41] See Leon T. Hadar, "Israel and America: It Is Divorce Time," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1990, p. B5.

[42] On American-European differences over the Middle East, see, for example, Alan Riding, "For the Europeans, Worry That War Could Hit Home," *New York Times*, January 13, 1991, p. E52; "Iraq/Kuwait Crisis: The International Response and Burden Sharing Issues," *Congressional Research Service Issue Brief*, January 2, 1991. For a discussion

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[43] Dan Balz and Al Kamen, "U.S. Seen Lacking Policy on Post-War Goals," *Washington Post*, March 24, 1991.

[44] Andrew Rosenthal, "What the U.S. . . . Wants to Happen in Iraq Remains Unclear," *New York Times* March 24, 1991, p. E3.

[45] Samir al-Khalil, "Do It Right. March to Baghdad," *New York Times*, March 27, 1991, op-ed page.