

**CONSEQUENCES OF THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS
ON U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEI	American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research
BMENAI	Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GMEI	Greater Middle East Initiative
ILA	Iraq Liberation Act
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
PNAC	Project for the New American Century
SALSA	Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act
UNMOVIC	United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

INTRODUCTION

Without doubt, September 11, 2001 was a day of unprecedented shock and tragedy in the history of the United States. Terrorists, incited by the Islamic extremist Osama bin Laden, used hijacked airplanes to demolish the World Trade Center in New York City and heavily damaged part of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The attack not only claimed the lives of as many as 3,000 civilians and service personnel, but also had a tremendous impact on U.S. policy.

Historians will view September 11 as initiating defining change in American foreign policy. Subsequently, the global war against terrorism has created clear guidelines for U.S. policy makers. “Rather than being defensive, [George W.] Bush had to turn American power into a revolutionary direction,” writes Alexander Moens, professor of political science at Simon Fraser University, Canada, “just as Harry Truman had to take on the revolutionary task of stopping communism wherever he could and [Ronald] Reagan had to explain again to the American people that the Soviet Union was ‘evil’ to push for its final demise.”¹

Nonetheless, it is worth asking again why the catastrophic terrorist attacks actually did happen. All 19 culprits were from Arab countries.² Was there any fault U.S. Middle East policy in the past that contributed to the tragic events?

Over the last 50 years, the United States has had three basic objectives for its Middle East policy: security for the state of Israel, a reliable flow of oil, and containing the Soviet Union. Maintaining regional stability joined this list after the collapse of the Soviet Union. William Quandt, a Middle East expert who served on the U.S. National Security Council in the 1970’s, suggests that the policy “has been remarkably successful *in terms of the standard*

¹Alexander Moens, *The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush: Values, Strategy and Loyalty* (Hampshire, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing, 2004) 173.

²Of the 19 hijackers, 15 came from Saudi Arabia. The remaining four were from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon.

definition of U.S. national interests.”³ Ironically, the success itself eventually led to the tragedy: “Because the United States was the most powerful player in the Middle East, because so many regimes were beholden to it, Washington became the target of the grievances of all those who were unhappy with the existing order in the region,” he notes.⁴

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush launched bombings on Afghanistan in October 2001 and drove the Taliban out of Kabul. His aim was to ensure that the country could no longer harbor Osama bin Laden and his aides. One can view this retaliatory operation as the first phase of Bush’s war on terror.

Seventeen months later, Bush began the second phase of his campaign. On March 20, 2003, after the expiration of a 48-hour deadline, which was set by Bush, demanding that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his two sons leave Iraq in an attempt to solve the Iraqi disarmament crisis, U.S. forces started to invade Iraq with the help of the United Kingdom. The U.S. forces, with unparalleled armed might, secured Baghdad on April 9, 2003, the day when Bush technically accomplished his purpose – regime change in Iraq.

Two years have passed since then. Yet, a heated debate lingers in the domestic and international political arena as to whether or not the Iraq War was legitimate. Certainly, Saddam had been a troublemaker for American interests in the Persian Gulf region since the Gulf crisis and war of 1990-1991. One still has to ask, however: Was Saddam’s regime a real threat to the United States? Why did he have to be removed by U.S. forces without international consensus?

Now, President Bush is strongly committed to what he believes is the “ultimate measure” to secure American life and property from terror. It is the promotion of freedom and

³William Quandt, “New U.S. Policies for a New Middle East?” ed.

David W. Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003) 460.

⁴Quandt 459.

democracy in the Middle East. In his February 2005 State of the Union address, Bush reiterated: “America will stand with the allies of freedom to support democratic movements in the Middle East.... To promote peace and stability in the broader Middle East, the United States will work with our friends in the region to fight the common threat of terror, while we encourage a higher standard of freedom.”⁵

This strategy can be called the third phase of Bush’s war on terror. Nevertheless, the goal of this strategy seems ambiguous and a very long way to reach. How will the U.S. administration proceed with its plan? Is it really possible to promote democracy in the Arab and Muslim world? And, from a broader standpoint, at stake is whether or not the current U.S. policy led by President Bush will effectively contribute to stability and welfare in the Middle East.

The main purpose of this paper is to answer such questions. With regard to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and subsequent war with Iraq, there is a considerable amount of critical and supportive discourse on Bush’s policy. Unfortunately, some of this is too emotional. As a journalist who was stationed in the Middle East for nearly four years, I tried to maintain as much objectivity as possible in analyzing the situation.

This paper starts with the argument in Chapter 1, in which I will undertake a comprehensive analysis of the run-up to the Iraq War, focusing on the frayed Middle Eastern post-Gulf War status quo and the threat of Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This section also includes some background on Bush’s administration and its decision-making process leading to the war.

Chapter 2 explains Bush’s ambition to promote democracy in the Middle East along with a brief history of the Middle East policies of former U.S. administrations. I will analyze the impact of the U.S.-proposed blueprint known as the Greater Middle East Initiative

⁵George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address,” 2 February 2005 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050202-11.html>>.

(GMEI) as well as Arab reactions to the initiative as well as to the general U.S. plan of promoting democracy.

In Chapter 3, I will highlight two contrasting Arab countries – Saudi Arabia and Syria – as case studies to examine how the Bush administration has driven Arabs to cooperate in the war on terror following September 11. Each of these two states reacted differently, but eventually followed U.S. pressure. Through this, I will attempt to explore the nature of Bush's foreign policy.

And, in the conclusion, I will undertake a general evaluation of Bush's grand strategy in the war on terror. I will also include several suggestions as to how President Bush and his administration should act in order to build better relations with Arabs and Muslims, a goal that would further the interests of both sides.

CHAPTER 1

REGIME CHANGE AS THE SOLUTION

U.S. foreign policy has depended on regional balance of power, and its stance toward Iraq often shifted according to international circumstances. During the 1980's, the United States approached Saddam Hussein with the hope of shielding American interests against Khomeini's Iran and gave significant military support to Iraq. This was a major shift in U.S. policy because, prior to this, it had viewed Iraq as being part of the Soviet bloc. Following the Persian Gulf crisis of August 1990, however, successive U.S. administrations labeled Saddam as the most unmanageable troublemaker to challenge the U.S. policy, and the 9/11 attacks eventually decided his fate.

Unacceptable Status Quo

In March 2005, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith told a conference at Harvard University that the 9/11 attacks had created an opportunity to "reexamine" U.S. Iraq policy.⁶ This suggested that the attacks led by George W. Bush's administration were aimed at settling old and unresolved problems that were inherited from his predecessors George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait. Subsequently, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 678 authorizing the states cooperating with Kuwait to use "all necessary means" to compel Iraq to cease certain activities that threatened international peace and security. The U.S.-led coalition forces began a military campaign against Iraq on January 17, 1991. On February 28, after his troops suffered severe damage,

⁶Douglas Feith, "Forum: Douglas Feith 'The War on Terrorism,'" Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 4 March 2005.

Saddam ordered a cease-fire and the Gulf War resulted in a decisive victory for the coalition forces, driving the Iraqi army out of Kuwait with minimal coalition deaths.

Why U.S. President George H. W. Bush did not then order his troops to advance to the Iraqi capital of Baghdad still remains controversial. One of the most prominent explanations is the president's hesitation to effect regime change in Iraq. Ostensibly, Bush followed UNSC Resolution 678, which stipulated that the mandate of the coalition forces was to liberate Kuwait from Iraq. But he was seemingly concerned about possible turmoil in a country with a complicated mosaic of religious and ethnic groups and tribes, if a strong leader like Saddam were suddenly thrust from power. The unrest could easily have led to instability in the neighboring region.

Clinton, who succeeded to the U.S. presidency in January 1992, pressed forward with the containment policy in Iraq, relying on economic sanctions and military presence in the area. The United States applied the same measures to Iran in a policy that was called "dual containment."

The decade between the Gulf War and September 11, 2001 was dominated by an "unacceptable status quo" for U.S. administrations. This can be explained from three standpoints.

The first is related to Iraq's WMD and U.N. sanctions. UNSC Resolution 687, adopted on April 3, 1991, immediately after the Gulf War, requires Iraq to give up its WMD in exchange for lifting the economic sanctions that had been imposed when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Saddam accepted the resolution, and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) started its inspections in Iraq. Saddam, however, never showed the international community any evidence of having destroyed his WMD.

Thanks to a report by Charles Duelfer, chief U.S. weapons inspector for Iraqi WMD, to the U.S. Congress in October 2004, we now know that, at the time of the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003, Saddam Hussein possessed neither chemical nor biological weapons and was

not trying to reconstitute his nuclear program. Duelfer's is the most comprehensive investigation to date on the former Iraqi regime and its military capabilities. The report suggests that, even though Saddam intended to restart his WMD program once the sanctions were lifted, he practically destroyed all his chemical and biological weapons in 1991 and ended his nuclear program after the 1991 Gulf War.⁷

The question remains as to why Saddam pretended to possess WMD. According to Duelfer's report, Saddam wanted to enhance his image in the Middle East and to deter Iran, against which Iraq had fought a devastating eight-year war. Saddam believed that "WMD helped save the regime multiple times."⁸

Saddam believed that Iraq's possession or supposed possession of WMD acted as a deterrent for other Arab nations against Iran and Israel. For this reason, many Arab countries did not care about the ambiguity of his tactics. At the same time, a contained and weakened Iraq was preferable for the Arab states, particularly Egypt and Syria, which had been competing with Iraq for leadership in the region.⁹

Economic factors further strengthened the Arab states' desire to maintain the status quo with Iraq. In April 1995, the UNSC adopted Resolution 986, which allowed Iraq to export up to \$1 billion worth of oil every 90 days. Income from the sale of oil was supposed to be used in part for food and other humanitarian supplies. This program, called "Oil for Food," provided business opportunities not only for Arab countries, but also for Western states. Using oil exports as a bargaining chip, Saddam gained the support of countries such as Russia and France.¹⁰ While Iraqi citizens continued to be impoverished, Saddam amassed

⁷"Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD" 30 September 2004 <http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/iraq_wmd_2004/index.html>.

⁸CIA "Comprehensive Report."

⁹Satoshi Ikeuchi, *Arabu Seiji no Ima o Yomu* [Read Current Arab Politics] (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2004) 274.

¹⁰In a bid to curry favor and end sanctions, Saddam allegedly gave former government officials,

huge sums of illicit money through his manipulation and exploitation of the program. The sanctions, originally imposed to weaken Saddam's power, "resulted in consolidating his power base instead."¹¹

The second part of the explanation revolves around the paradox of the U.S. military presence in the Gulf region, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the United States sent about 50,000 troops to the kingdom at the request of the Saudi government. The U.S. military presence continued at the level of tens of thousands after the Gulf War in order to protect the kingdom from threat of Saddam and, more significantly, to maintain a stable flow of oil from the Gulf region. Saudi Arabia contains 25 percent of the world's known oil reserves, and about 10 percent of the oil consumed by Americans is imported from Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. military presence, however, stirred up severe internal disputes in Saudi Arabia, home of Islam's two holiest sites – Mecca and Medina – and of the ultra-conservative Wahhabi sect of Islam. Islamic extremists, most notably Osama bin Laden, portrayed the U.S. troops as infidels and launched a series of criminal attacks against U.S. interests inside and outside the kingdom. The major bombings against U.S. interests in which bin Laden was allegedly involved in the period after the Gulf War to the 9/11 terrorist attacks are as follows:

- Feb. 26, 1993: The World Trade Center in New York.
- June 25, 1996: The U.S. military barracks outside Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.
- Aug. 7, 1998: Simultaneous attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.
- Oct. 12, 2000: The USS Cole in Aden harbor in Yemen.

activists, journalists, and U.N. officials vouchers for Iraqi oil that could then be resold at a profit. A panel investigating the United Nations' Iraqi Oil-for Food Program issued a report in February 2005, charging the long-term head of the program with a "grave conflict of interest that undermined the world body's integrity." Secretary-General Kofi Anan pledged to punish the program chief and another official named in the probe.

¹¹Ikeuchi 275.

Osama bin Laden also levelled harsh criticism against the House of Saud as well for accommodating the U.S. military, declaring that the current Saudi regime should be toppled. Moreover, it needs to be noted that non-Saudi Islam extremist groups, such as Egypt's Al Gama'at Al Islamiyya, joined Osama's forces with the aim of establishing a worldwide pan-Islamic caliphate.¹²

The third and final point is the stalemate in the Middle East peace process. After Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, one of the architects of the historic Oslo Accord, was assassinated on November 4, 1995, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were all but paralyzed. With military strife continuing between Palestinian and Israeli forces, Saddam gave financial support to the Palestinian extremists in hopes of strengthening his popularity and weakening Israeli resistance. The Iraqi president who fought against "U.S. aggression" was, for sure, a spiritual prop for Palestinian militants.

It might be understandable that given such an "unacceptable status quo" George W. Bush started his first term in January 2001 with substantial attention to Saddam.

According to the well-known journalist Bob Woodward, it was on November 21, 2001, just 72 days after the terrorist attacks and shortly after the Taliban regime crumbled in Afghanistan, when President Bush directed Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to begin planning the war with Iraq.¹³ In fact, there are several reports that Bush and his advisors were much interested in Saddam as early as his inauguration.

Richard Clarke, who served as the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism for both Clinton and George W. Bush, can attest to this. According to him,

¹²They issued a statement entitled "The World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders" in February 1998, saying it was the duty of all Muslims to kill U.S. citizens – civilian or military – and their allies everywhere.

¹³Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002) 2.

when Bush took office, his aides had little interest in bin Laden, preferring to talk about Saddam Hussein at every opportunity.¹⁴

Also, Bush's former treasury secretary Paul O'Neill revealed that the president had showed strong interest in military options to change the Iraqi regime when he chaired his first National Security Council meeting on January 30, 2001.¹⁵ As early as October 1998, Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA), which stated that the United States should support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein, into law. The ILA, however, did not include military operations. Nonetheless, Bush never ruled out toppling Saddam's regime by force.

Inflated Threat: WMD

Focusing on the "unacceptable status quo," the threat of the Saddam's WMD was forced to the front burner as the principal reason for attacking Iraq. In his famous State of the Union address of January 29, 2002, in which President Bush condemned Saddam's regime by saying it constituted an "axis of evil" along with Iran and North Korea, he maintained that: "Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade.... This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world."¹⁶

Certainly there were, and still are now, arguments that compare the United States to an "empire." According this view, the U.S. invasion of Iraq was undertaken with the intention

¹⁴Richard Clark, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004) 227-32.

¹⁵Ron Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neil* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004) 70-76.

¹⁶Bush, George W., "President Delivers State of the Union Address," 29 January 2002 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>>.

of reshaping the entire world to suit America's own interests. Thus, the Bush administration emphasized the threat of WMD as an excuse to gain support from the United Nations because Iraq's rejection of inspections would be a good reason to justify an armed conflict.¹⁷

Even if this "empire" theory seems to lack balance, removing Saddam was regarded as producing a wide range of advantages beyond eliminating the threat of WMD. Shibley Telhami, professor of Middle Eastern politics at the University of Maryland and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institute, writes there was a "dominant vision" in the Bush administration, which meant "the overt employment of American power to change the strategic picture." He continues, "The argument is that by winning a war with Iraq, the United States would turn that important country into an American ally, which would automatically change the calculations of all its neighbors."¹⁸

Once a viable pro-American Iraq were established, this line of thinking went, it would act favorably on its bordering countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Turkey, all of which are strategic U.S. allies in the region. It would also act as a counterbalance to the other two bordering states, Syria and Iran, which are hostile to the United States. With this new geopolitical map, Israel would be safer than before. As far as a stable supply of oil is a critical issue for Americans, it is definitely in U.S. interests to put Iraq, the second largest oil reserve state in the world, on the American side. This prospect was without any doubt "alluring to many Washington analysts and decision makers."¹⁹

Nevertheless, a number of analysts – pro-Republican and pro-Democrat alike – agree by and large on the Bush administration's seriousness about the threat of Iraqi WMD. Robert

¹⁷Kiichi Fujiwara, "Teikoku no Senso wa Owaranai [Empire's War Is Endless]," *Iraku Senso: Kensho to Tenbo* [Iraq War: Review and Prospect], ed. Jitsuro Terashima, Yasushi Kosugi, Kiichi Fujiwara (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003) 98-115.

¹⁸Shibley Telhami, *The Stakes: America and The Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002)152.

¹⁹Telhami.

Satloff, Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, says: “They were legitimately afraid of the situation. After September 11, everything became more urgent. Sensitivity to the threat went up.”²⁰ Thomas Carothers, a U.S. foreign policy expert who serves as Senior Associate and Director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment, also says: “After 9/11, the idea that somebody who was very hostile to the United States would have nuclear weapons and might be willing to sell them suddenly was of much greater concern. It was serious.”²¹

Indeed, judging from comments from top Bush administration officials, it seems reasonable to presume that their central concern was still Saddam’s WMD. Less than two months after the 9/11 attacks, Bush said: “We will not wait for the authors of mass murder to gain WMD.”²² In his 2002 State of the Union address, Bush again stressed, “We’ll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer.”²³

Probably the comment by then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in a CNN interview on September 8, 2002 most efficiently represents the mood in the Bush administration before the invasion. Rice acknowledged that “there will always be some uncertainty” in determining how close Iraq may be to obtaining a nuclear weapon, but said, “We don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.”²⁴

It should be added that President Bush himself told Woodward during an interview: “... September the 11th made the security of the American people the priority... a sacred duty

²⁰Robert Satloff, personal interview, 23 March 2005.

²¹Thomas Carothers, personal interview, 23 March 2005.

²²Quoted in William Kristol, “Taking the War Beyond Terrorism,” *The Washington Post* 31 January 2002: A25.

²³“President Delivers State of Union Address.”

²⁴Condoleezza Rice, Interview with CNN, “Top Bush Officials Push Case Against Saddam,” 8 September 2002 <<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/09/08/iraq.debate/>>.

for the president. It is the most necessary duty for the president, because if the president doesn't take on that duty, who else is going to?"²⁵

More problematic than the argument on the motivation leading to the Iraq War is why the Bush administration came to such inaccurate assumptions regarding Iraq's possession of substantial chemical and biological weapons and its continuous effort to make nuclear weapons. The answer seemingly lies in the psychology of Bush and his senior advisors.

For example, according to an analysis by Moens, the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, which then Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director George Tenet presented to the White House on October 4, 2002, was similar to intelligence known during the Clinton administration. The central problem was that Saddam had not accounted for destroying WMD materials. That eventually led to the belief that Saddam possessed WMD and maintained links to Al Qaeda. "Bush and his advisors back in 2002 read old intelligence, but with new vigor," Moens notes.²⁶

In this context, a comment by Hans Blix, former Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), sheds further light on the issue. The former top U.N. inspector said: "I never felt that there was any bad faith. I think they were convinced [in] what they were saying. But I think that they were inclined to put exclamation marks where they should have a question mark."²⁷ I could conclude that, in the new environment after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Bush and his advisors were caught in a kind of paranoia, which inflated Saddam's image as a lethal threat beyond his reality.

²⁵Woodward, *Plan 27*.

²⁶Moens 182.

²⁷Hans Blix, Interview with MSNBC News "Hardball with Chris Matthews," Transcript of 15 March 2004 <<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4540609>>.

New Defense Strategy and Critics' Contentions

To justify its bid to invade Iraq, the Bush administration came up with a new military theory, the National Security Strategy, officially issued in September 2002. It justifies “preemptive” military action, but also leaves enough room for “preventive” action. In fact, there is consensus among international legal experts that preemptive war, the use of force when imminent threat exists, is legal, while preventive military action, striking before a country has developed a capability that could someday become threatening, is generally regarded as illegal. As John Lewis Gaddis, a noted historian of U.S. foreign policy, notes, the strategy is “the most dramatic and most significant shift in American foreign policy since the beginning of the Cold War.”²⁸

Many of Bush’s critics, especially Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, maintained that the war with Iraq would violate international law. At one point, Kennedy noted: “Now, the Bush administration says we must take preemptive action against Iraq. But what the administration is really calling for is preventive war, which flies in the face of international rules of acceptable behavior.”²⁹

Critics asserted that Saddam was not substantiated as an “imminent threat.” They maintained that the Iraqi could be continuously contained. Distinguished realist scholars John J. Mearsheimer at the University Chicago and Stephen M. Walt at Harvard University were outstanding among them. They cited the case of the Soviet Union and reasoned that U.S. nuclear deterrence would not allow Saddam to blackmail other countries. They said:

... the Soviet Union, which had a vast nuclear arsenal for much of the Cold War, was never able to blackmail the United States and its allies and did not even try to do so. Despite their deep antipathy towards the United States and

²⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, Interview with Council on Foreign Relations, 4 February 2004 <<http://www.cfr.org/publication.php?id=6755>>.

²⁹Edward Kennedy, “The Bush Doctrine of Preemption,” Statement delivered on the floor of the U.S. Senate, October 7, 2002. <http://www.truthout.org/docs_02/10.09A.kennedy.htm>.

their ideological commitment to spreading socialism, the Soviets were checkmated by the American nuclear deterrent.... America, after all, is not only deeply committed to preventing Saddam from conquering any of his neighbors, but it also has a massive nuclear arsenal that it would use against Iraq if he struck first against another state with nuclear weapons. Thus, the threat of Iraqi nuclear blackmail is not credible.³⁰

The two professors also refuted the Bush administration's claim that Saddam would transfer nuclear weapons secretly to a terrorist group such as Al Qaeda. They say that giving nuclear weapons to al Qaeda would have been extremely risky for Saddam, even if he could have done so without being detected, because "he would lose all control over when and where they would be used." The professors further asserted that the fear of retaliation from the United States would be extremely effective in stopping Saddam's nuclear handoff. "Instead of attacking Iraq and giving Saddam nothing to lose, the Bush administration should be signaling that it might very well hold him responsible if some terrorists group used WMD against us, even if we cannot prove it."³¹

In fact, relations between Iraq and Al Qaeda proved to have been different from what the administration described prior to American invasion of Iraq. The 9/11 Commission Report, released on July 22, 2004, concluded: "The reports describe friendly contacts and indicate some common themes in both sides' hatred of the United States. But to date we have seen no evidence that these or the earlier contacts ever developed into a collaborative operational relationship."³² These criticisms, however, did little to change Bush and his advisors' thinking about Iraq policy.

³⁰John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Can Saddam Be Contained? History Says Yes," *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, International Security Program Occasional Paper* November 2002.

³¹Mearsheimer and Walt.

³²National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004) 66.

The ideas presented in the new defense strategy were strongly supported by the large faction of neo-conservatives in the Bush administration. Vice President Dick Cheney, who served as defense secretary under the first President Bush in the early 1990's, including the period of the Gulf War, believed that removing Saddam was a job that the senior Bush administration had left undone. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was also a strong advocate for removing the Iraqi dictator. Other hard-liners include Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith, and Richard Perle, who serves on the influential Defense Policy Board and, until recently, was its chairman.

The group led by William Kristol, chairman of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), espouses policy unique among traditional conservatives. His group advocates a more active role for the administration and a more aggressive U.S. foreign policy. Its aim is to restructure the Middle East and supplant dictators around the world, using military power when necessary against any country seen as a potential threat. In 1997, the group's magazine, *The Weekly Standard*, carried a cover story headlined "Saddam Must Go." In 1998, 18 of these hardliners signed an open letter warning the Clinton administration that Saddam's regime constituted an immediate threat and urging the government to do more to remove Saddam. By 2002, 10 of the 18 signatories were serving in senior positions in the Bush administration.³³

The first to put Iraq on the American policy agenda in the wake of the 9/11 attacks were Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz at the Camp David meeting on September 15, 2001. In that meeting, however, Secretary of State Colin Powell strongly opposed hasty military interventions by saying that the United States should wait until the linkage between the 9/11 attacks and Saddam was confirmed.³⁴ Powell was thought to be one of a few senior Bush

³³Moens 163.

³⁴Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002) 83, 84.

officials who occasionally opposed the war with Iraq. But, Moens writes, “there is no evidence that Powell ever opposed regime change in Iraq, as the question for him was not ‘whether,’ but ‘how’ and ‘when.’”³⁵

³⁵Moens 169.

CHAPTER 2

AMBITION TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY

Since invading Iraq, President Bush has increasingly raised his voice in defense of promoting democracy in the Middle East, a region he considers a hotbed of terrorists. This new step in the war on terror is worth pursuing, but it seems to be far-reaching and difficult. The U.S. administration needs to proceed with it cautiously and patiently.

Bush's Logic

After winning the extraordinarily close race against Democrat candidate John Kerry, George W. Bush was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2005. In his inaugural address, he vowed to spread democracy and freedom “with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” Using the words “freedom” or “liberty” 49 times, the president concluded:

There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom.... All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.³⁶

President Bush's speech was remarkable in its ambition and idealism. White House officials told *The Washington Post* and other leading U.S. newspapers that his speech was meant as a crystallization and clarification of policies he is pursuing in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East and elsewhere.³⁷

³⁶Bush, “President Sworn-In to Second Term,” 20 January 2005 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>>.

³⁷“Bush Speech Not a Sign of Policy Shift, Officials Say,” *The Washington Post* 22 January 2005: A01.

First of all, it is necessary to clarify why the president believes democracy and freedom will lead to security for Americans. Based on a speech given by President Bush in early 2003,³⁸ I simplify his logic as follows:

- Hateful ideology and violence including terrorism are shaped and nurtured by oppression.
- Terrorists are protected by oppressive regimes elsewhere.
- Free nations, in contrast, encourage creativity, tolerance and free enterprise.
- Free governments do not build WMD for the purpose of mass terror.

President Bush believes that democracy is absolutely the right way and that he has the duty to liberate oppressed people. Moens points out that Bush “has some ‘theocon’ in him, deriving some of his ideas from principles of faith rather than from any ideology.”³⁹ On the other hand, there are a number of arguments that view this logic as one-track thinking. Carothers, for example, asserts that: “Radical Islam is a broad socio-religious movement over the last one hundred years. Combination of the radical religious movement with anger over the United States has led to anti-American terrorism. Democracy alone will not cure this.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, we should be pursuing democracy because, as Carothers admits, “the more democracy is in the world, the better relationships we will have.”⁴¹

U.S. Record on Indifference to Middle East Democracy

Promotion of democracy became a major aim of American foreign policy during the Reagan administration in the 1980’s. Amid the Cold War, then President Ronald Reagan and his advisors framed their ideological challenge to the Soviet Union primarily in terms of

³⁸Bush, George W., “President Bush Presses for Peace in the Middle East,” 9 May 2003 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030509-11.html>>.

³⁹Moens 173.

⁴⁰Carothers interview.

⁴¹Carothers interview.

democracy and individual freedom. The administration extended diplomatic and financial support to East European civil rights groups that challenged communist regimes. The Clinton administration also employed a doctrine of promoting global democracy, to reduce ethnic conflicts, to gain economic benefit from countries that abide by international law, and to prove democratic credentials both at home and overseas. Clinton deployed U.S. troops abroad to facilitate democracy in Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, and Kosovo in 1999.⁴²

Whatever U.S. policy achieved in promoting democracy to the rest of the world, the Middle East was effectively excluded from such efforts by successive U.S. administrations, which – Republican and Democrat alike – remained indifferent to democratization in that region. As Muqtedar Khan, a non-resident Brookings Institution fellow, says, Americans were “the quintessential status quo power in the Middle East”⁴³ in the latter part of the 20th century.

Here, I should survey the trends toward democracy in the Middle East. According to “The 2001-2002 Survey of Freedom” by the non-profit organization, Freedom House, the roots of democracy and freedom are weakest in the 14 Middle Eastern countries (excluding those in North Africa). In this region, Israel is only the state with “free” status, meaning democratic, and three states – Jordan, Kuwait and Turkey – are “partly free.” The other 10 (71 percent) are categorized as “not free.” Israel and Turkey are the region’s only electoral democracies.

To take a wider view, the Islamic world – in particular, its Arabic core – has seen little significant evidence of improvements in political openness, respect for human rights, and transparency since the early 1970’s, when the third major historical wave of democratization

⁴²Gary C. Gambill, “Explaining the Arab Democracy Deficit, Part II: American Policy,” *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* Vol. 5, No. 8-9, August/September 2003 <http://www.meib.org/articles/0308_me1.htm>.

⁴³Muqtedar Khan, “Prospects for Muslim Democracy: The Role of U.S. Policy,” *Middle East Policy* Vol. X, Fall 2003, No. 3.

began. The number of “free” countries around the world has increased by nearly three dozen over the past 20 years, but not one of them has been a Muslim-majority state.⁴⁴

Why was the United States indifferent to this unfavorable situation in the Middle East? As I mentioned in the introduction, for more than 50 years, the United States had pursued three basic objectives in its Middle East policy: security for the state of Israel, a reliable flow of oil, and containing the Soviet Union. For Israel’s security, “a weak, divided, disorganized and undemocratic Middle East” was favorable.⁴⁵ To put it another way, Washington feared that democracy would empower anti-Israeli and anti-American voices that would pose a threat to the region’s stability. To neglect authoritarian regimes, even to strengthen them in some cases, was considered a reasonable approach.

As far as the flow of oil is concerned, it was necessary for U.S. administrations to nurture close alliances with the autocratic ruling families of the Persian Gulf oil-producing states, especially with the House of Saud. As long as its interests were assured, the U.S. government did not scrutinize the internal workings of these countries. Although, the Saudi people were denied political growth by an autocratic regime, Americans did little to pressure Saudi Arabia. Instead, a wide range of political and economic cooperation reinforced the royal family’s ability to maintain its rule.

In a speech at the National Defense University on March 8, 2005, President Bush acknowledged that the United States had sometimes supported autocratic governments in the Middle East. He said: “The advance of hope in the Middle East also requires new thinking in the capitals of great democracies – including Washington, D.C. By now, it should be clear

⁴⁴Adrian Karatnycky, “The 2001-2002 Freedom House Survey of Freedom: The Democracy Gap” <<http://freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2002/akessay.pdf>>.

⁴⁵Khan.

that decades of excusing and accommodating tyranny, in the pursuit of stability, have only led to injustice and instability and tragedy.”⁴⁶

Major Shift

It was not until September 11, 2001 that Americans truly recognized the necessity of promoting democracy in the Middle East. For the Americans, it was shocking that most of the 19 hijackers in the 9/11 terrorist attacks came from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, both of which were strong U.S. allies. Consequently, the Bush administration reviewed its Middle East policy, having realized that authoritarian Arab regimes that had been supported by the United States were no longer a source of stability; instead, they were the primary threat.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks led Bush and his advisors to conclude that the absence of democracy and freedom radicalized Islamic movements by denying them peaceful channels of expression. The open call for democracy in the Arab and Muslim world was a “major change” in American foreign policy.⁴⁷

President Bush’s aspiration for democratization in the Middle East was announced as early as January 2002, in his State of the Union address. He said: “America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere.... America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance.”⁴⁸

On September 12, 2002, President Bush told the U.N. General Council: “If we meet our responsibilities, if we overcome this danger, we can arrive at a very different future. The

⁴⁶Bush, George W., “President Discusses War on Terror,” 8 March 2005 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050308-3.html>>.

⁴⁷Gambill, “Explaining, Part II.”

⁴⁸Bush, “President Delivers State of Union.”

people of Iraq can shake off their captivity. They can one day join a democratic Afghanistan and a democratic Palestine, inspiring reforms throughout the Muslim world.”⁴⁹ In another major speech on February 26, 2003, he stressed: “A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region.”⁵⁰ It is noteworthy to add here that, in those days, Bush strengthened his pressure on the Palestinian Authority to introduce internal reforms and repeatedly proclaimed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat an “obstacle to peace.”

The war with Iraq started on March 20, 2003. Bush and his advisors thought a democratic Iraq would become a significant exemplar for the remaining authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. The war sent a clear message to many countries in the region that the threat of U.S. military power was not theoretical, but practical, especially if they maintained their hostile posture toward America and its policies. This negative “demonstration effect” apparently had been expected, at least in the minds of neo-conservatives, when they planned the war with Iraq.

Greater Middle East Initiative

In the wake of the Iraq War, President Bush presented a comprehensive and international initiative for encouraging democratic reform in the Middle East.⁵¹ He laid out his vision in a speech in November 2003 at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy at the United States Chamber of Commerce, in which he said:

⁴⁹Bush, George W., “President’s Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly,” 12 September 2002 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>>.

⁵⁰Bush, George W., “President Discusses the Future of Iraq,” 26 February 2003 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>>.

⁵¹As a lead-up to this, in December 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a new policy called the Middle East Partnership Initiative to provide \$29 million in initial funding for encouraging reforms in economics, politics, and education.

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe – because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo. Therefore, the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East”⁵²

This speech was also significant in that he portrayed establishing a free Iraq as the latest front in the “global democratic revolution”⁵³ led by the United States. The term referred to U.S. foreign policy under the Reagan administration to free the people of Soviet-dominated Europe. Given the diminishing chance of finding WMD in Iraq, the Bush administration needed to highlight a convincing cause.

The details of his vision were first unveiled by an Arabic daily. On February 13, 2004, the London-based Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat* published a “leaked” U.S.-compiled document, the GMEI. The original document, intended for internal distribution among designated senior officials of the G-8 (a group of eight industrialized countries), was meant to signal a new U.S. plan for political and economic reform of the “Greater Middle East” encompassing the Arab world, plus Iran, Turkey, Israel, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The document was scheduled to be adopted at the Sea Island Summit in the United States in June 2004.

The draft is premised on the claim that there was a growing “pool of politically and economically disenfranchised individuals” in the region. It details the levels of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment in Arab countries by heavily citing U.N. Arab Human Development Reports. While alarming G-8 members, whose common interests are thought to be threatened by “an increase in extremism, terrorism, international crime, and illegal migration,” the draft strongly urges G-8 member states to “launch a coordinated response to

⁵²Bush, George W., “President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East,” 6 November 2003 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>>.

⁵³Bush, “President Discusses Freedom.”

promote political, economic, and social reform in the region” and to “forge a long-term partnership with the Greater Middle East's reform leaders.”⁵⁴

For the U.S. administration, the aim of this initiative is to bring Europe, Japan, and the Middle East together around a set of commitments to help transform the region politically and economically. Recommendations in the draft include funding literacy programs, training legislative representatives, and providing technical assistance in adopting more effective investment and trade policies.

For Arabs, the GMEI was disturbing because the draft was assembled with little or no consultation with the governments concerned. Shortly after its publication, Arab government leaders voiced their outrage. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who is one of the strongest pro-American allies in the region, said: “Whoever imagines that it is possible to impose solutions or reform from abroad on any society or region is delusional.”⁵⁵ Saudi Arabia, another U.S. ally, concurred. When Mubarak visited Riyadh, he and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah issued a joint statement rejecting the American proposal. The statement affirmed that “Arab states proceed on the path of development, modernization and reform in keeping with their people's interests and values,” and the two leaders declared that Arab states “do not accept that a particular pattern of reform be imposed on Arab and Islamic countries from outside.”⁵⁶

Regarding the initiative, the European Union (EU) stressed that Arab countries must have ownership of the reform process, even if they agree to work with the United States. Eventually the draft was modified, and the documents adopted at the Sea Island Summit were

⁵⁴“U.S. Working Paper for G-8 Sherpas,” *Dar al Hayat*
<<http://english.daralhayat.com/Spec/02-2004/Article-20040213-ac40bdaf-c0a8-01ed-004e-5e7ac897d678/story.html>>.

⁵⁵Quoted in “U.S. Plan for Mideast Reform Draws Ire of Arab Leaders,” *The New York Times* 27 February 2004: A03.

⁵⁶“Saudi, Egypt Reject U.S. Democracy View,” *Aljazeera net* 25 February 2004
<<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/EE547059-E358-47FF-A60A-DA10BA21753E.htm>>.

a scaled-down version rather than the original one. Giving sufficient consideration to the concerns held by Arabs, the documents, collectively known as the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI), included such comments as “Successful reform depends on the countries in the region, and change should not and cannot be imposed from outside,” and “Each country is unique and their diversity should be respected. Our engagement must respond to local conditions and be based on local ownership. Each society will reach its own conclusions about the pace and scope of change.”⁵⁷

Arab Leaders and Their Rationale

Increasingly, few doubt that a democratic society is more desirable than an autocratic one. The definition of democracy is not easy, but at least transparency in governing systems is necessary to prevent a skewed distribution of wealth. Division of powers contributes to this goal when check-and-balance mechanisms work together. And, probably what is more important, freedom of expression and participation in politics bring dignity to those who manage their lives and communities by themselves.

In the 1980’s, many countries in Latin America, such as Brazil and Argentina, were democratized. In East Asia over the past 20 years, Taiwan and South Korea have succeeded in attaining economic prosperity by building up democratic states with the rule of law and greater equality of opportunity. It seems that the controversy over the GMEI lies in what approach should be taken to reach its goals in the complex Arab and Muslim world.

Bush’s critics maintain that imposing democracy will not work. “The whole concept [of the initiative] was dead on arrival because it was made in America, which is now radioactive in the Arab world,” argues Thomas L. Friedman, a well-known American analyst

⁵⁷“Fact Sheet: Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa” 9 June 2004 <<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/fs/33375.htm>>.

of the Middle East. “Real change happens when people see something in those they compare themselves to, and draw their own conclusions – not when it’s imposed on them.”⁵⁸

Masayuki Yamauchi, a prominent Japanese scholar of Islamic studies at the University of Tokyo, also asserts that, even though efforts to foster democracy in the Middle East come from the “goodwill” of people outside the region, they would prompt the opposite of the result intended if the motivation and circumstances do not fit the characteristics and circumstances of Middle East countries. He warns that even free elections might be “a container to justify a radical Islamist and totalitarian system,” if the meaning of elections is not deeply understood and rooted among the people based on a constitutional tradition.⁵⁹

His words recall a military coup that took place in Algeria in 1992. Fearful of the possibility of an Islamic regime, the Algerian military establishment carried out a revolt to prevent fundamental Islamists from coming to power after winning the elections. The coup was eventually declared legitimized by France, Algeria’s former suzerain power, as well as the United States. “One conclusion that can be drawn from historical cases,” Telhami writes, “is that even if democracy leads to more stability, transitions to democracy are often extremely unstable and, in the end, unpredictable.”⁶⁰

The issue that I would like to point out here is that most Arab leaders have been dragging their feet and raising a number of excuses in carrying out democratic reforms.

The leaders, at least in the frontline states bordering Israel, often maintain that, because their countries are still in a state of war with Israel, freedom and civil rights have to be restricted in the name of national security. This notion is represented by the fact that Arab leaders strongly urged G-8 member states, and finally succeeded, to add to the BMENAI’s

⁵⁸Thomas L. Friedman, “Maids vs. Occupiers,” *The New York Times* 17 June 2004: A29.

⁵⁹Masayuki Yamauchi, “Nihon Arabu Taiwa to Daichuto Koso [Dialogue Between Japan and Arabs, and the Greater Middle East Initiative],” *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 2003/2004 Vol. I/II: 11.

⁶⁰Telhami 160-161.

final papers a statement affirming that the G-8's "support for reform in the region will go hand in hand with our support for a just, comprehensive, and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflicts...."⁶¹

The existence of major external security threats, however, has not blocked democratization in countries such as India, South Korea, and Taiwan, which have powerful military establishments and face external security threats comparable to the frontline Arab states.⁶² Certainly, there have been ups and downs in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, and the recent situation is substantively different from the one that existed before the Oslo Accord of 1993. Further, Israel now realizes that its security is tied to democracy in the Middle East. As Khan says, "Just as for the United States, democracy in the region is a necessity for the national security of Israel."⁶³

Regarding the issue of incompatibility between democratic principles and Islamic rule, it is said that that Islam, unlike other major religions, offers explicit prescriptions pertaining to social, economic, and political issues, placing them outside the realm of public decision-making.⁶⁴ Bernard Lewis, one of the world's most renowned historians of Islam and the Middle East, describes Islam as having a historical background in which "obedience to the sovereign was a religious as well as a political obligation, and disobedience a sin as well as a crime," even though the political rulers were autocrats.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, a recent survey has revealed that Muslims overwhelmingly prefer democracy to any other form of government. According to a survey conducted in 2003,

⁶¹"Fact Sheet: Partnership for Progress."

⁶²Gambill, "Explaining the Arab Democracy Deficit: Part I," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* Vol. 5 No. 2, February /March, 2003 <http://www.meib.org/articles/0302_me.htm>.

⁶³Khan.

⁶⁴Gambill, "Explaining the Arab Democracy Deficit: Part I."

⁶⁵Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964) 48.

immediately after the Iraq War, by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in Washington D.C., in most Muslim populations, large majorities continue to believe that Western-style democracy can work in their countries. This is the case in Muslim nations such as Kuwait (83 percent), Jordan (69 percent), Morocco (64 percent), and Pakistan (57 percent), as well as in religiously diverse countries like Nigeria (75 percent). There are no substantive differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in Nigeria on this point.⁶⁶

While a number of analysts claim differently, numerous religious leaders and intellectuals like Khan maintain that there is nothing in Islam and in Muslim practice that is fundamentally opposed to democracy, justice, freedom, fairness, equality, or tolerance.⁶⁷ Khan further asserts that a few Muslims reject democracy “because they reject the West, allowing the West to have ownership of this universal value.”⁶⁸ Similarly, Carothers maintains that the problem is not Islam, but radicals. “Every major religion has over history changed its relationship with politics. People used to say the Catholic religion was not compatible with democracy because of such an authoritarian tradition. But the Catholic Church gradually adapted. Islam has many interpretations, and lot of them are compatible with democracy,” he says.⁶⁹

Positive Impacts

While many aspects of President Bush’s attempt to facilitate freedom and democracy need to be examined, his pressure has been truly driving Arab leaders into drawing up their own brand of reform even though it would still be state-led. Saudi Arabia embarked on its

⁶⁶“Views of a Changing World 2003: War with Iraq Further Divides Global Publics,” *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press Survey Report* 3 June 2003
<<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=185>>.

⁶⁷Khan.

⁶⁸Khan.

⁶⁹Carothers interview.

first nationwide local elections starting in February 2005. And, in that same month, Egyptian President Mubarak also ordered a revision of the country's election laws to allow multiple candidates to run in the upcoming presidential election.

But more significant is Bush's attitude in inspiring reformers and giving them more room to operate in societies that have long been closed. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, as a prelude to some progressive measures taken by the government, hundreds of citizens took to the streets of Riyadh in October 2003 demanding political, economic, and administrative reforms – the first such large-scale protest ever in the conservative kingdom where demonstrations are illegal. In Egypt, in December 2004, about 1,000 Egyptians likewise took to the streets in Cairo calling for an end to Mubarak's 23-year presidency.

The most dramatic example is Lebanon. In February 2005, tens of thousands of people protested against the pro-Syrian Lebanese cabinet and demanded the removal of Syrian troops from their country following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Harir. Shortly after that, Prime Minister Omar Karami announced his cabinet's resignation. Of course, there were bottled-up frustrations among the Lebanese people, but as Satloff stresses: "One should not underestimate the importance of the American president standing up on matters of principle. Bush's reelection was huge important event for this democracy movement in the Middle East."⁷⁰

⁷⁰Satloff interview.

CHAPTER 3
TRANSFORMATION OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH ARAB COUNTRIES
— THE CASES OF SAUDI ARABIA AND SYRIA —

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush has been sticking with a tough strategy in the Middle East under the banner of the war on terror. This has created new dimension in relations between the United States and Arab countries. To study this transformation, I will select the cases of Saudi Arabia and Syria, the states that have been most affected by the U.S. policy.

Saudi Arabia

Overnight Mood Swing

The alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia dates back more than 60 years. The official U.S. presence in the kingdom was established in 1943, when a military mission was sent to Saudi Arabia. After the two nations concluded their first formal defense agreement in 1951, the United States strengthened its military assistance. At that time, the kingdom's royal family feared Soviet influence in the region as well as incursions by neighboring countries.⁷¹ In the light of energy strategy, it was crucial for the United States to keep the nation secured. During and since the Cold War, the United States has been providing Saudi Arabia with security in exchange for a stable supply of oil. There is no doubt that the two countries have been in a tremendously important mutual alliance.

It could be said that U.S.-Saudi relations were "special." This was particularly true during the period between the Persian Gulf War and September 11, 2001. While significantly

⁷¹John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992: Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002) 199-202.

concerned over human rights violations and exportation of ultra-conservative Wahhabi Islam, successive American administrations kept silent. Washington never demanded political and economic reforms in the kingdom in earnest because it did not want the oil-rich country to be destabilized by empowering reformists.

Because of the fact that Osama bin Laden and 15 of 19 hijackers on 9/11 were from Saudi Arabia, the American mood towards the kingdom worsened overnight. According to a poll by Zogby International conducted a month after the 9/11 attacks, only 24 percent of Americans polled viewed Saudi Arabia favorably, while 58 percent held unfavorable opinions. About eight months before the attacks, those numbers were almost reversed, at 56 percent and 28 percent, respectively.⁷² After 9/11, America's leading media began to publish harsh editorials questioning the U.S.-Saudi relationship. For instance, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* wrote editorials with the same title: "Reconsidering Saudi Arabia," on November 11, 2001 and October 14, 2001, respectively.⁷³ On October 17, 2002, the Council on Foreign Relations – one of the most influential and prestigious foreign policy think tanks in the United States – released a disquieting report pointing out that funds continued to flow directly and indirectly to Al Qaeda through charities based in Saudi Arabia, and accusing its government of acquiescence.

No Alternatives for the Saudis

Nine days after 9/11, President Bush delivered a pivotal address to a joint session of Congress. He declared: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that

⁷² James Zogby, "New Poll Shows Damage Done," *Washington Watch* 24 December 2001 <<http://www.aaiusa.org/wwatch/122401.htm>>.

⁷³"Reconsidering Saudi Arabia," *The New York Times* 11 November 2001: B06; *The Washington Post* 14 October 2001: 4-12.

continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.”⁷⁴ Given that climate, there was no other choice for the Saudis but to withdraw their recognition of the Taliban as the legal government of Afghanistan, which was harboring Osama bin Laden, and to reluctantly assist in the U.S. military offensive against the regime. In October 2001, during this campaign, while the Saudi government did not give permission for U.S. warplanes to fly from its soil, much of the air war was apparently run from the high-tech combined U.S.-Saudi air operations center at Prince Sultan Air Base 80 km south of Riyadh. Later, in March 2003, during the war in Iraq, Saudi Arabia finally gave the United States access to bases in the kingdom, though Saudi officials reiterated that their soil had not been used to attack Iraq directly.

For the House of Saud, the war with Iraq was in a sense preferable resolving domestic stability because the nation’s leaders were caught in a dilemma over maintaining American military presence. Earlier, the Gulf crisis of 1990 brought a huge number of U.S. military forces to the kingdom. At peak, about 50,000 American troops were stationed in the kingdom to protect it from the threat of Saddam and to maintain regional stability. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the presence of these troops aroused the resentment of Islamic extremists. As a result, the forces of political Islam, represented by bin Laden, strengthened their efforts to topple the Saudi royal regime.

The regime change in Iraq, i.e., the demise of the Iraqi threat, was, consequently, to diminish the necessity of a U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia. In a major shift in the American focus in the Persian Gulf, the United States essentially ended its military presence in the kingdom by early 2004. Only an estimated 300 U.S. troops currently remain there,⁷⁵

⁷⁴Bush, George W., “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” 20 September 2001 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>>.

⁷⁵The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2004 • 2005* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004) 136.

and the Americans have moved their major air operations center for the Middle East to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

Trying to Be the “Good Guy”

Since the 9/11 attacks, under the banner of the war on terror, the United States has increased pressure on the Saudi government. Saudi Arabia definitely needed to be regarded as cooperative with U.S. efforts. Additionally, Riyadh itself apparently came to realize, through repeated violence such as the bombings of housing compounds in Riyadh on May 12 and November 9, 2003, that the threat of extremists like Al Qaeda was reaching serious levels.

Given the circumstances, the Saudi government undertook a series of measures to crack down on Islamic extremists. Aiming at drying up their financial resources, the Saudi government put severe controls on Saudi-supported charities and began to monitor financial transactions from the kingdom. The measures included: requiring Saudi Foreign Ministry approval of any charitable projects undertaken outside the country; audits of Saudi charities; and establishing new oversight bodies within the government to monitor charities. The task for American foreign policy then is to push for follow-up for its own declared policy. In August 2003, the Bush administration dispatched a team of senior counterterrorism officials to press the Saudis. Just a few weeks later, the Saudi government allowed the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to establish a permanent liaison office in Riyadh to coordinate with their Saudi counterparts.⁷⁶

In the arena of religious affairs, the Saudi government has strengthened its efforts to eliminate cells of the Al Qaeda network in the kingdom. In late May 2003, the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs announced the removal of 353 religious officials from their positions and

⁷⁶F. Gregory Gause III, “Saudi Arabia and the War on Terrorism,” *A Practical Guide to Winning the War on Terrorism*, ed. Adam Garfinkle (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004) 95, 96.

the requirement that 1,357 others undergo further training.⁷⁷ All were critically targeted as fostering Islam extremism.

In the light of President Bush's belief that democratization ensures security, transforming Saudi society in that direction is most important. Thus, the Bush administration has urged the Saudi government to promote its political and social reforms. In September 2004, for instance, the U.S. State Department announced that it had put Saudi Arabia on an official list to designate the kingdom having committed "particularly severe violations" of religious freedom.⁷⁸ The department said freedom of religion does not exist in Saudi Arabia and is not recognized or protected under the country's laws.

On the part of the Saudis, the country's effective ruler, Crown Prince Abdullah, has been spearheading political reforms. In June 2003, he launched unusual meetings of "National Dialogue," attended by clergy, academics, and elites. This series of forums tackled sensitive issues, such as school curriculum and the role of women, which are closely related to Islamic traditions. The most prominent Saudi step of all was that, on February 10, 2005, the government embarked on the first nationwide local elections in the kingdom's history. Although only half of the council members were elected and women were not allowed to participate, it was a major step for the conservative kingdom, which has an unelected national advisory body, but no parliament.

In his State of the Union address of February 2, 2005, President Bush applauded Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Palestine for their efforts at democratic reform, while he denounced Syria and Iran for threatening stability in the region.⁷⁹ In response, the Saudi government put

⁷⁷Gause 98.

⁷⁸"International Religious Freedom Report 2004," released on 15 September 2004 by the U.S. Department of State <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35507.htm>>.

⁷⁹Bush, "State of the Union Address." The president stated: "The government of Saudi Arabia can demonstrate its leadership in the region by expanding the role of its people in determining their future." Meanwhile, he also said: "Syria still allows its territory, and parts of Lebanon, to be used by terrorists who seek to destroy every chance of peace in the region."

a two-page advertisement in *The New York Times* of February 17, 2005. The ad featured a four-day Counter-Terrorism International Conference, the first meeting of its kind hosted by the Saudi government, which was held a few days before the elections. The government also invited foreign media to cover the conference as well as the local elections. This was obviously intended to appeal to American and international society with regard to the Saudis' cooperative attitude, in other words, a "good guy" gesture in the war on terror.

Syria

"Helped Save American Lives"

In contrast to American relations with Saudi Arabia, those with Syria have been more sensitive. Even though Syria has been on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism since the list's inception in 1979 for its continuing support of and safe haven for militant organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah, successive American administrations have never closed diplomatic channels and have kept U.S. ambassadors in Damascus. This is because Syria is a party to the Arab-Israeli peace process that the United States needs to engage in to pacify Israel, America's strongest ally in the Middle East.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Damascus has experienced growing international isolation. In the hope of improving relations with the West, Hafezzel Assad, father of the current president Bashar Assad, sent token military personnel to support the American-led coalition to defeat Iraq's Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War, despite having maintained its position as one of the most vocal opponents of the United States in the Arab and Muslim world. By cooperating with the West, Damascus expected to obtain foreign aid and U.S. intervention to resolve the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations.

It was noteworthy that Syria's relations with the United States, though they had not been particularly favorable following the failure of the Clinton-senior Assad summit in March 2000, improved considerably in those days because of Damascus' assistance in the U.S. war on terror, particularly in pursuing the Islamic extremist group Al Qaeda, which opposed secular states like Syria. According to *The Washington Post* on June 20, 2002, Vincent Cannistraro, a former CIA counterterrorism chief, said Syria has "been completely cooperative" in investigating Al Qaeda and persons associating with Al Qaeda. In some cases, he said, Syrian officials have avoided arresting suspects so they can continue to monitor their conversations and movements and report back to the United States. The paper also quotes Richard W. Erdman, the chief State Department specialist for Syria, as saying that Syria's actions against Al Qaeda have "helped save American lives."⁸⁰

Other nations that United States named as "sponsors of terrorism," followed suit. For instance, President Omar el-Bashir of Sudan promised to cooperate in the war on terrorism. As a result, U.S.-Sudanese relations improved. A few days after September 11, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail spoke by telephone – the first high-level contact between the two countries in years. Subsequently, Libya declared that it would give up its development of WMD in December 2003 in return for international economic aid.

The Iraq War as a Watershed

Such close relations between United States and Syria, however, deteriorated as the United States proceeded with its invasion of Iraq. During and after the war, Bush administration officials leveled accusations against Syria, saying that Damascus was supplying the Iraqi military with equipment such as night-vision goggles; abetting

⁸⁰Quoted in "U.S.-Syria Relations Not Quite as Cold," *The Washington Post* 20 June 2002: A15.

high-ranking members of the fleeing Iraq Baath Party; and allowing Islamist jihadists to cross the border into Iraq to attack American troops. In addition, the officials loudly charged, based on their intelligence reports, that Syria possessed and had tested chemical weapons. In an interview with CBS' *Face the Nation*, which aired on April 13, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld cited these charges and said: "The government's making a lot of bad mistakes, a lot of bad judgment calls in my view, and they are associating with the wrong people and the effect of that hurts the Syrian people."⁸¹ The Syrian government denied all the charges.

In addition, at an American-Israel Public Affairs Committee meeting on March 30, 2003, Powell warned: "Syria also now faces a critical choice. Syria can continue direct support for terrorist groups and the dying regime of Saddam Hussein, or it can embark on a different and a more hopeful course. Either way, Syria bears the responsibility for its choices, and for the consequences."⁸² Syria was clearly categorized as an impediment.

Indeed, the war with Iraq was not one that Syria could fully support. There were several reasons for this. Syria had been strengthening its ties with Iraq from the late 1990's to the collapse of Baghdad. The demise of the Saddam regime meant that Syria would be deprived of cheap oil from Iraq as well as a market for its exports. The most frightening concern for President Bashar Assad, however, was that a liberated Iraq would have significant political implications for his regime. In many respects, the Saddam regime was a carbon copy of Syria. They were governed by rival branches of the same secular Arab nationalist Baath party with its traditional three pillars: pan-Arab ideology, socialism, and anti-colonialism. Pan-Arab ideology, in particular, was used for the minority Alawites to dominate the Syrian

⁸¹Donald Rumsfeld, "News Transcript: Secretary Rumsfeld Interview on CBS Face the Nation" 13 April 2003 <<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030413-secdef0101.html>>.

⁸²Colin Powell, "Remarks at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's Annual Policy Conference" 30 March 2003, <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/19174.htm>>.

population. Both regimes remained totalitarian, using similar methods of control (e.g., overlapping security-intelligence agencies). For the current Assad regime, “the rise of a democratic, stable government in place of its Baathist twin next door would constitute an existential threat.”⁸³

The Syrians responded to Powell’s warning with defiance and said that their “critical choice” had been made. In a statement by the Syrian Foreign Ministry issued the following day, Syria declared that it would stand with Iraq. On March 27, 2003, Syria's leading state-appointed religious official issued a *fatwa* or religious decree calling on Muslims to carry out suicide operations to defend Iraq.⁸⁴

As far as relations with the Saddam regime were concerned, both Egypt and Jordan had also received substantial economic benefits through the supply of oil from Iraq and the relevant U.N. Oil for Food Program. While they once opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq, they eventually shifted their stance to effectively support the war. Under strong pressure from the United States, Syria was isolated in the Arab community.

U.S. Retaliation

The U.S. answer to Syria’s steadfastness was punitive. In addition to past trade restrictions on the “sponsors of terrorism,” on December 12, 2003, President Bush signed the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSA), which imposed fresh sanctions on Syria and officially denounced Damascus for its support of terrorism, the occupation of Lebanon, WMD programs, illegal imports of Iraqi oil, and its role in the ongoing security problems in the Middle East. SALSA went into effect on May 11, 2004. Its sanctions include:

⁸³Gambill, Gary C., “The American-Syrian Crisis and the End of Constructive Engagement,” *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* Vol. 5, No. 4, April 2003 <http://www.meib.org/articles/0304_s1.htm>.

⁸⁴Gambill, “Crisis.”

- Prohibition on the export to Syria of any items that appear on the United States Munitions List (arms and defense weapons, ammunition, etc.) or Commerce Control List (dual-use items such as chemicals, nuclear technology, propulsion equipment, lasers, etc.);
- Prohibition on the export to Syria of products of the United States, other than food and medicine; and
- Prohibition of any air carrier owned or controlled by the Syrian government to take off from or land in the United States.⁸⁵

In an interview with the Cairo-based newspaper *Al-Ahram International* just before the implementation of the act, the president made it clear why he supported it. He said: “Because they [Syria] will not fight terror, and they won’t join us in fighting terror. We’ve asked them to do some things, and they haven’t responded.”⁸⁶

The Bush administration has also turned its fire against Damascus in the international arena. In September 2004, a U.S.- and French-sponsored resolution to press Lebanon to reject Syrian intervention in its politics and call on Syrian troops to leave Lebanon was successfully passed by the UNSC. The vote on the 15-member panel was nine in favor, none against, and six abstaining.

It is unlikely that the United States will suddenly move for regime change in Syria, largely due to the Arab-Israeli peace process factor. Indeed, SALSA does not seem to be causing critical damage to Syria because the United States is not originally a strong trade partner like the EU. Besides, in implementing SALSA, Bush excluded restrictions on the movement of Syrian diplomats in Washington, D.C. and New York, which was one of the six sanctions that SALSA includes. This should be interpreted as U.S. willingness to maintain

⁸⁵“Fact Sheet: Implementing the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003,” 11 May 2004 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040511-7.html>>.

⁸⁶Bush, George W., “Interview by Al-Ahram International,” 6 May 2004 <<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/32319.htm>>.

open channels with Damascus. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that, instead of weakening Syria, Washington expects Damascus to “play its role” in stabilizing the region.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, U.S. relations with Syria have further worsened since the February 14 murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, to which, Washington believes, Damascus is at least indirectly linked. The Bush administration recalled its ambassador to Syria the following day to protest the murder. Then, at a press conference, Bush stressed that Syria was “out of step” with democratic trends in the Middle East.⁸⁸ The U.S. administration is studying the possibility of tougher sanctions on Syria, effectively tightening penalties imposed last May.

In March 2005, responding to weeks of intense pressure, President Assad suggested that Syrian troops would fully withdraw from Lebanon in a few months. If he mismanages this issue and comes to further conflict with the United States, Washington will surely strengthen its attitude – intimidate the “bad guy” – rather than engage in dialogue.

Analysis

With an overwhelming voice from the rest of the world to condemn the 9/11 terrorist attacks and being asked by President Bush to identify themselves as “enemy or friend,” political leaders in the Middle East chose to follow the president’s policy. In some cases, like the war in Iraq, Bush’s campaign against terror is too tough for many Arab states, but there is no choice but to follow his direction. In the face of Bush’s steadfastness and the military and financial might of the United States, Arab leaders now understand that it is futile to resist.

⁸⁷Yutaka Takaoka, “Monsekiho no Hatsudo ni Kansuru Kosatsu [Examination on Implementation of SALSA]” *Chuto Chosakai Kawaraban* [The Middle East Research Institute of Japan Report] 14 May 2004.

⁸⁸“Bush Calls Syria ‘Out of Step’ On Democracy in the Mideast,” *The New York Times* 18 February 2005: A9.

Even for Syria's Bashar, who is making a show of holding out against the United States, it is seemingly a matter of time before he will order a full withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. Arab leaders know how vulnerable they are, and an air of resignation is hanging over Arab political elites.

On the other hand, hatred and distrust of the United States is increasingly prevalent among ordinary people in the Middle East as the United States is strengthening its hegemony in the region. Under these circumstances, the U.S.-led initiative will not easily succeed. Promotion of democracy would be a telling example in this regard.

According to a Zogby International poll conducted in July 2003 – four months after the U.S. invasion of Iraq – the overall Saudi impression of the American people was 70 percent “unfavorable” and 24 percent “favorable.” Meanwhile, regarding American freedom and democracy, the Saudis were split, with 44 percent saying they had an “unfavorable” impression and 40 percent saying “favorable.”⁸⁹ Judging from these results, one can presume that, if the Saudis go forward with democratization, people might increasingly raise anti-American opinions and press the Saudi royal family to cooperate less with the United States

From this standpoint, some argue that, if Washington pushes for nationwide Saudi elections to national institutions like the Consultative Council (currently an appointed body), this would have a negative impact on U.S. interests because anti-Americanism would directly and significantly affect the Saudi government's decision-making.⁹⁰ Thus, Washington needs to be cautious about how and to what extent it moves ahead with its Middle East policy.

⁸⁹“Saudis Reject Bin Laden and Terrorism; Tragedies of 9/11 and in Riyadh Do Not Represent Saudi People or Islam, According to New Zogby International Poll. Impressions of American Life and Culture Down From 2002 Study,” Zogby International release, 31 July 2003 <<http://www.zogby.com/search/ReadNews.dbm?ID=725>>.

⁹⁰Gause 101.

CONCLUSION

Still burnt in my brain is the horrifying TV image I saw in Tokyo of the collapsing World Trade Center's twin towers in New York. This must have been etched even more indelibly on the collective American memory. It is understandable that most Americans, including the media, scholars, and politicians, were subsequently caught up in a paranoid fear of terror. In that climate, President George W. Bush widened the meaning of the war on terror to an invasion of Iraq.

Terrorist attacks are difficult to detect in advance and so devastating if carried out. Insofar as the prime role of political leaders is to secure their nation's safety, preemptive military options might be effective. Thus, this strategy is definitely here to stay during Bush's second term as president, and is likely to remain in place during subsequent presidencies, whether Republican or Democrat.

Nevertheless, I am concerned about Bush's way of thinking about his Middle East policy, which may easily jeopardize U.S. relations with countries in that region.

Bush has been implementing the war on terror without defining terrorism in an understandable way to Arabs and Muslims. To put it more precisely, he has defined it only by his arbitrary perspective: simple categorization of "black or white" and "good guy or bad guy." This is convenient for proceeding with his own war on terror, but does not reflect the complexity of regional politics in the Middle East. For instance, the Palestinian liberation movement should be differentiated from Osama bin Laden's criminal acts in terms of their cause and legitimacy, even though violence by Palestinian radicals is problematic. If the only superpower exercises its military might without a standard and sufficient explanation, it will create suspicion and fear in minds of the rest of the world, particularly in Arab and Muslim nations.

The Arabs and Muslims have been irritated by the traditional U.S. “double standard” policy, which applies different norms to different parties. They have been asking, for example: Why does the United States harshly criticize the Palestinian *intifada*, while it defends Israeli slaughter of Palestinians? Why does the United States press Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program, while it is acquiescent in Israel? These are the general sentiments of Arabs and Muslims.

Thus, many Arabs and Muslims increasingly believe that, under the banner of the war on terror, America is cloaking its real motive of reshaping the Middle East for Israel and its own interests. As a result, more hatred against the United States has been generated. What is required for the president would be to have an in-depth and fair view of Middle East affairs and speak to the people of the region in a humble way.

President Bush is now an enthusiastic advocate of spreading freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Islamic historian Bernard Lewis argues: “The war against terror and the quest for freedom are inextricably linked, and neither can succeed without the other.”⁹¹ I agree with his notion in principle and believe the success of the challenge would improve the welfare not only of the people of the Arab and Muslim world, but of all of us. The values of Islam are not incompatible with the central values of democracy, such as transparency of government and political participation. As noted Chapter 2, the current deficit of democracy in the Middle East lies in large part with those autocrats who want to hang on to their seats of power forever.

Danielle Pletka, a foreign policy expert at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI), a neo-conservative think tank, refutes the argument that imposing democracy will not work. “There are very few dictators or autocrats who willingly relinquish power. Without pressure outside, it doesn’t happen.” She further says: “It is wonderful and

⁹¹Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House, 2004) 169.

important for countries to talk about how to manage political parties, how to manage free information systems, how to manage a real honest education system.”⁹² We should be more aware, however, that each country has different characteristics and a different level of social development. It is difficult to apply the same package of reform to all Middle East states at the same speed. While putting pressure on autocratic leaders, it is necessary for the U.S. administration maintain close dialogue with those states and try to find strategies that match them best.

Just to impose reform on a state would trigger resentment from its people and make it more difficult to carry out reform initiatives. In this regard, incentive-based approaches sometimes work to accelerate reform efforts in the Middle East. Among several leverages, the most effective would be economic assistance with clear conditions attached. Financial aid, access to U.S. markets, and preferential trade agreements should be given according to the level of progress that regimes make toward democracy. Inviting those states to be integrated into international economic and political frameworks would be also effective. We see such an example in Turkey, where the government has been carrying out a substantial democratic reform in order to obtain membership in the EU.

Finally, I would like to stress that stability and prosperity in the Middle East depend on emergence of a truly democratic Iraq. Struggles for nation-building are continuously experienced by the Iraqi people. At the end of January 2005, Iraqi citizens defied the threat of terror to cast their ballots in poll stations, and this was witnessed through TV and newspapers all over the world. Of course, this will never make up for the number of mistakes that the Bush administration made when the United States invaded Iraq. We certainly need to continue examining the war in the light of legitimacy and strategy. Nevertheless, the election was the first major victory for the majority of Iraqis and the U.S. administration.

⁹²Danielle Pletka, personal interview, 24 March 2005.

On the other hand, it is fair to say that desperate insurgency continues and that the situation is not improving much. In large part, the current tumult caused by Islamic extremists affiliated with Al Qaeda and their operation cannot be called “resistance” any more. As Dennis Ross, a former U.S. envoy to the Middle East, stresses: “A failure in Iraq would be a devastating setback in the war on terror, convincing the jihadists that at the end of the day, they will always prevail.”⁹³

We must now adopt realistic thinking on this matter. The United States should use all of its political and economic capital in Iraq. Allies such as Japan and Britain need to continue their support in a more effective way. For the European countries whose relations with United States have been divided and strained, it is high time to move forward together with the Americans. In order to prompt this cooperation, more flexibility and rationality are necessary on the part of President Bush.

⁹³Dennis Ross, “The Middle East Predicament,” *Foreign Affairs* January/February 2005.

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