

# After the Cold War: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East

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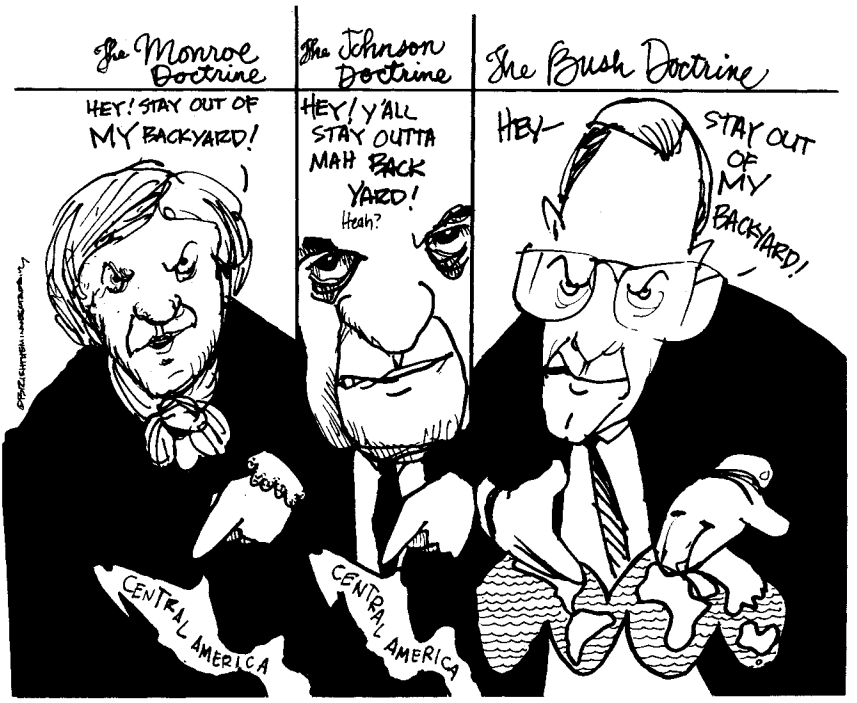
The topic I am addressing might be understood in two ways: normatively, as a question about what policy should be, or descriptively, as a question about what it is likely to be. I will keep to the latter interpretation. Any attempt to consider what may lay ahead is, of course, speculative. The most we can hope for is informed speculation—informed, that is, by an attempt to understand what has happened in the past and what new circumstances exist today. Given time constraints, I will have to keep to a brief sketch. I have discussed these matters elsewhere, with evidence and explicit documentation that I cannot introduce here.

U.S. policy toward the Middle East has been framed within a certain strategic conception of world order that is widely shared, though there are tactical disagreements; sometimes sharp ones, as we saw during the debate in the United States over the Gulf crisis. There are also important changes in the world, to which this strategic conception must be adapted.

There has been much recent talk about a "new world order." Implicit in it is the assumption that there was an "old world order"

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that is changing. That system of world order was established after World War II. At the time, the United States was in a position of power without historical precedent. It had about fifty percent of the world's wealth and a position of remarkable security. Political and economic elites were well aware of these facts, and, not surprisingly, set about to organize a world system favorable to their interests—although they also recognized, quite explicitly, that more noble rhetoric would be useful for propaganda purposes.

In high-level studies, extensive plans were developed for what was called a "Grand Area," a world system in which U.S. interests would be expected to flourish. The plans extended to all major areas and issues, and were to a large extent implemented in the early postwar years. In fact, there is a very close similarity between these studies and top-level government planning documents of later years.

Within the Grand Area, the industrial powers were to reconstruct, under the leadership of the "great workshops," Japan and Germany, now under U.S. control. It was necessary to restore traditional conservative rule, including Nazi and fascist collaborators, to destroy and disperse the antifascist resistance, and to weaken the labor movement. This was a worldwide project, conducted in various ways depending on local circumstances and needs. It constitutes chapter one of postwar history, and generally proceeded on course.

With respect to the Soviet Union, policy divided along two basic lines, both of which aimed to incorporate the USSR within the Grand Area—which, for most of the region, meant returning it to its pre-1917 status as a quasi-colonial dependency of the West, part of the Third World, in effect. The hard-line "rollback" approach was given its basic formulation in NSC 68 of 1950, written by Paul Nitze, who succeeded George Kennan as head of the State Department Policy Planning Staff. The softer Kennan policy of "containment" proposed reliance on the overwhelming economic advantages of the U.S. and its allies to achieve more or less the same ends. Note that these goals have basically been achieved, with the collapse of the Soviet system in the 1980s.

Few anticipated a Russian military attack. The general assumption was that "it is not Russian military power which is threatening us, it is Russian political power" (Kennan, October 1947).

The Third World also had its role in the Grand Area: to be "exploited" for the needs of the industrial societies and to "fulfill its major function as a source of raw materials and a market." I am quoting from documents of George Kennan and his Policy Planning Staff. Kennan was one of the most influential of the postwar planners, representing generally the "softer" extreme of the spectrum. He emphasized that a major concern was "the protection of our resources"—*our* resources, which happen, by geological accident, to lie in other lands. Since the main threat to our interests is indigenous, we must, he explained in secret, accept the need for "police repression by the local government." "Harsh government measures of repression" should cause us no qualms as long as "the results are on balance favorable to our purposes." In general, "it is better to have a strong regime in power than a liberal government if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by Communists." The term *Communist* refers in practice to labor leaders, peasant organizers, priests organizing self-help groups, and others with the wrong priorities.

The right priorities are outlined in the highest-level secret documents. They stress that the major threat to U.S. interests is "nationalistic regimes" that are responsive to popular pressures for "immediate improvement in the low living standards of the masses" and for diversification of the economies for domestic needs. Such initiatives interfere with the protection of our resources and our efforts to encourage "a climate conducive to private investment," which will allow foreign capital "to repatriate a reasonable return." The threat of Communism, as explained by a prestigious conservative study group, is the economic transformation of the Communist powers "in ways that reduce their willingness and ability to complement the industrial economies of the West," and thus to fulfill the Third World function. This is the real basis for the intense hostility to the Soviet Union and its imperial system from 1917, and the reason why independent nationalism in the Third World, whatever its political cast, has been seen as a "virus" that must be eradicated.

Plans for the Middle East developed within this context. The major concern was (and remains) the incomparable energy reserves of the region. These were to be incorporated within the U.S.-dominated system. As in Latin America, it was necessary to displace traditional French and British interests and to establish

U.S. control over what the State Department described as "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history," "probably the richest economic prize in the world in the field of foreign investment." President Eisenhower described the Middle East as the most "strategically important area in the world."

France was quickly excluded by legal legerdemain, leaving a U.S.-British condominium. There was conflict for a time, but it was soon resolved within the framework of U.S. power. U.S. corporations gained the leading role in Middle East oil production, while dominating the Western Hemisphere, which remained the major producer until 1968. The United States did not then need Middle East oil for itself. Rather, the goal was to dominate the world system, ensuring that others would not strike an independent course. There was, at the time, general contempt for the Japanese, and few anticipated that they would ever be a serious economic competitor. But some were more farsighted. In 1948, Kennan observed that U.S. control over Japanese oil imports would help to provide "veto power" over Japan's military and industrial policies. His advice was followed. Japan was helped to industrialize, but the United States maintained control over its energy supplies and oil-refining facilities. As late as 1973, the United States controlled about ninety percent of Japanese oil. After the oil crisis of the early 1970s, Japan sought more diverse energy sources and undertook conservation measures. These moves reduced the power of the veto considerably, but influence over oil pricing and production, within the range set by market forces, remains a factor in world affairs.

As elsewhere, the major policy imperative is to block indigenous nationalist forces. A large-scale counterinsurgency operation in Greece in 1947 was partially motivated by the concern that the "rot" of independent nationalism there might "infect" the Middle East. A CIA study held that if the rebels were victorious, the United States would face "the possible loss of the petroleum resources of the Middle East." A Soviet threat was concocted in the usual manner, but the real threat was indigenous nationalism, with its feared demonstration effects elsewhere.

Similar factors led to the CIA coup restoring the shah in Iran in 1953. Nasser became an enemy for similar reasons. Later, Kho-

meini was perceived as posing another such threat, leading the United States to support Iraq in the Gulf war. The Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein then took over the mantle, shifting status overnight from moderate friend to a new Hitler when he invaded Kuwait, displacing U.S.-British clients. The primary fear throughout has been that nationalist forces not under U.S. influence and control might come to have substantial influence over the oil-producing regions of the Arabian peninsula. Saudi Arabian elites, in contrast, are considered appropriate partners, managing their resources in conformity to basic U.S. interests and assisting U.S. terror and subversion throughout the Third World.

The basic points are fairly clear in the secret planning record, and often in the public government record as well. Thus, in early 1990, the White House presented Congress with its annual National Security Strategy Report, calling—as always—for a bigger military budget to protect us from the threat of destruction by enemies of unimaginable power and bestiality. For the last few years, it has been hard to portray the Russians as the Great Satan, so other enemies have had to be conjured up. By now, it is conceded that the enemy is Third World nationalism. This report therefore explains that we have to build up a powerful high-tech military because of the "technological sophistication" of Third World powers, intent on pursuing their own course. We must ensure the means to move forces "to reinforce our units forward deployed or to project power into areas where we have no permanent presence," particularly in the Middle East, where the "threats to our interests" that have required direct military engagement "could not be laid at the Kremlin's door"—a fact finally admitted. "In the future, we expect that non-Soviet threats to these interests will command even greater attention." In reality, the "threat to our interests" had always been indigenous nationalism, a fact sometimes acknowledged, as when the architect of President Carter's Rapid Deployment Force, aimed primarily at the Middle East, testified before Congress in 1980 that its most likely use was not to resist a (highly implausible) Soviet attack, but to deal with indigenous and regional unrest (called "radical nationalism" or "ultranationalism"). Notice that the Bush administration plans were presented at a time when Saddam Hussein was still George Bush's amiable friend and favored trading partner.

The Anglo-American condominium in the Gulf region received its first major challenge in 1958, when the nationalist military coup in Iraq overthrew a dependent regime. In his history of the oil industry, Christopher Rand describes the 1958 coup as "America's biggest setback in the region since the war," "a shocking experience for the United States" that "undoubtedly provok[ed] an agonizing reappraisal of our nation's entire approach to the Persian Gulf." Recently released British and American documents help flesh out earlier surmises.

It's worth mentioning, in passing, that there is an earlier history, including British terror bombing of civilians after World War I and the request of the RAF Middle East command for authorization to use chemical weapons "against recalcitrant Arabs as experiment." The request was granted by the secretary of state at the War Office, who stated that he was "strongly in favour" of "using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes," arguing that gas should "spread a lively terror" and condemning the "squeamishness" of those who objected to "the application of Western science to modern warfare" (Winston Churchill). Our values have changed very little over the years.

In 1958, Kuwait was the particular concern. The "new Hitler" of the day was Gamal Abdel Nasser, and it was feared that his pan-Arab nationalism might spread to Iraq, Kuwait, and beyond. One reaction was a U.S. Marine landing in Lebanon to prop up the regime; another was the apparent authorization of nuclear weapons by President Eisenhower "to prevent any unfriendly forces from moving into Kuwait." To deflect the nationalist threat, Britain decided to grant Kuwait nominal independence, following the prescriptions designed after World War I when the imperial managers realized that British rule would be more cost-effective behind an "Arab facade," so that "absorption" of the colonies should be "veiled by constitutional fictions as a protectorate, a sphere of influence, a buffer State, and so on" (Lord Curzon). Britain reserved the right of forceful intervention to protect its interests, with the agreement of the United States, which reserved the same right for itself elsewhere in the region. The United States and Britain also agreed on the need to keep the oil fields in their hands. Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd had already summarized the major concerns, including free access to Gulf oil pro-

duction "on favourable terms and for sterling," and "suitable arrangements for the investment of the surplus revenues of Kuwait" in Britain. Declassified U.S. documents reiterate that Britain's "financial stability would be seriously threatened if the petroleum from Kuwait and the Persian Gulf area were not available to the U.K. on reasonable terms, if the U.K. were deprived of the large investments made by that area in the U.K., and if sterling were deprived of the support provided by Persian Gulf oil."

These factors and others provide reasons for the United States "to support, or if necessary assist, the British in using force to retain control of Kuwait and the Persian Gulf." In November 1958, the National Security Council recommended that the United States "[b]e prepared to use force, but only as a last resort, either alone or in support of the United Kingdom," if these interests were threatened. The documentary record is not available beyond that point, but there is little reason to suspect that guiding doctrines, which had been stable over a long period, have undergone more than tactical change.

At the time, a main concern was that Gulf oil and riches be available to support the ailing British economy. That concern was extended by the early 1970s to the U.S. economy, which was visibly declining relative to Japan and German-led Europe. As the United States and Britain lose their former economic dominance, privileged access to the rich profits of Gulf oil production is a matter of serious concern. The point was captured by Martin Walker in the *Guardian,* reporting the latest joke on Wall Street. Question: Why do the United States and Kuwait need each other? Answer: Kuwait is a banking system without a country, and the U.S. is a country without a banking system. Like many jokes, it is not a joke.

Capital flow from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the other Gulf principalities to the United States and Britain has provided a good deal of support for their economies, corporations, and financial institutions. These are among the reasons why the United States and Britain often have not been averse to increases in oil price. The sharp price escalation in 1973 was in many ways beneficial to their economies, as was widely noted in the business press and scholarly journals; the U.S. trade balance with the oil producers actually improved and became favorable to the United States as

the oil price rose, thereby enriching U.S. energy, manufacturing, and construction corporations and allowing the United States and Britain to profit from their own high-priced oil in Alaska and the North Sea. The issues are too intricate to explore here, but these factors surely remain operative.

When we consider these factors, it should come as no great surprise that the two states that established the imperial settlement and have been its main beneficiaries followed their own course in the Gulf crisis, moving at once to undercut sanctions and block any diplomatic track, thus narrowing the options to the threat or use of force. In this course they were largely isolated, apart from the family dictatorships that rule the Gulf oil producers as an "Arab facade."

The relative isolation of the two radical militarist powers was sometimes recognized, though in odd and occasionally comical ways. Thus, the *Independent* railed against the European Community for undermining "EC solidarity." The miscreants included Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, and Spain, while Britain stoutly maintained solidarity—with itself and, of course, the big guy across the seas. The U.S. media preferred to condemn "fair weather allies" who lack the courage of the cowboy—Britain, with its manly traditions, aside.

One major U.S. concern in the Middle East has been, and remains, the "stupendous source of strategic power." A second has been the relationship with Israel. There is considerable debate over whether that special relationship derives from the role of Israel in U.S. strategic planning or from the influence of a "Jewish lobby." My own view, for what it is worth, is that the former factor is by far the more significant and that the so-called "Jewish lobby" is actually one component of a much broader group, including liberal intellectuals who were deeply impressed by Israel's military victory in 1967, for reasons that had a good deal to do with the domestic scene. In this judgment, I disagree with many commentators, including the leadership of the lobby, which publicly claims vast influence. But we needn't try to settle this issue. However one weights the factors, both are there. I'll keep here to the first, which in my view is the more important. I would expect, frankly, that the United States would ditch Israel in a moment if U.S. planners found this in their interest. In that case, the Jewish lobby

would be as ineffective as it was in 1956, when Eisenhower and Dulles, on the eve of a presidential election, ordered Israel out of the Sinai.

One can trace the thinking behind the "special relationship" back to Israel's early days. In 1948, Israel's military successes led the Joint Chiefs of Staff to describe it as the major regional military power after Turkey, offering the United States means to "gain strategic advantage in the Middle East that would offset the effects of the decline of British power in that area" (Avi Shlaim). Abram Sachar, whose interpretation is particularly interesting because he is custodian of the archives of Truman's influential associate David Niles, alleges that Truman's ultimate decision to support Israeli expansion was based upon the Israeli military victory, which showed that Israel "could become a strategic asset—a kind of stationary aircraft carrier to protect American interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East."

As for the Palestinians, U.S. planners had no reason to doubt the assessment of Israeli government specialists in 1948 that the refugees either would be assimilated elsewhere or "would be crushed": "some of them would die and most of them would turn into human dust and the waste of society, and join the most impoverished classes in the Arab countries" (Moshe Sharett's Middle East section). Accordingly, there was no need to trouble oneself about them. U.S. assessments of Israel and the Palestinians have hardly changed since that time.

In January 1958, the National Security Council concluded that a "logical corollary" of opposition to radical Arab nationalism "would be to support Israel as the only strong pro-Western power left in the Middle East." That understanding was extended in the 1960s. U.S. intelligence regarded Israeli power as a barrier to Nasserite pressures on Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing clients. That role was firmed up with Israel's smashing victory in 1967, destroying the nationalist threat, and again in 1970, when Israeli threats played some role—a major role, according to Kissinger's rather dubious account—in protecting Jordan from a possible Syrian effort to support Palestinians who were being slaughtered by King Hussein's army. U.S. aid to Israel sharply increased at that point.

These moves were in the context of the new Nixon doctrine,

according to which other powers must deal with regional problems within the "overall framework of order" maintained by the United States, as Kissinger put it, admonishing Europe to put aside any ideas about striking out on its own. A few years later, Kissinger pointed out in private talks with American Jewish leaders, later released, that one of his prime concerns was "to ensure that the Europeans and Japanese did not get involved in the diplomacy" of the Middle East—a commitment that persists and that helps explain U.S. opposition to any international conference. In the Middle East, Iran and Israel were to be the "cops on the beat" (in the phrase of Defense Secretary Melvin Laird), safeguarding order. Police headquarters, of course, remained in Washington.

More serious analysts have been clear about these matters. In May 1973, the Senate's ranking oil expert, Senator Henry Jackson, emphasized "the strength and Western orientation of Israel on the Mediterranean and Iran on the Persian Gulf," two "reliable friends of the United States," with powerful military forces, who worked together with Saudi Arabia "to inhibit and contain those irresponsible and radical elements in certain Arab States . . . who, were they free to do so, would pose a grave threat indeed to our principal sources of petroleum in the Persian Gulf" and, in reality, also threaten U.S. control over riches that flowed from these sources.

The relationship deepened as Israel became, in effect, a mercenary state, beginning in the 1960s, when the CIA provided Israel with large subsidies to penetrate black Africa in the U.S. interest and, later, in Asia and particularly Latin America. As one high official put it during the Iran-contra affair, Israel is "just another federal agency, one that's convenient to use when you want something done quietly." Other relationships also developed, including intelligence sharing, weapons development, and testing of new advanced weapons in live battlefield conditions.

The relations between Israel and Iran were intimate, as later revealed (in Israel) after the shah fell. The relations of Israel and Iran to Saudi Arabia are more subtle and sensitive, and direct evidence is slight. Saudi Arabia was virtually at war with both Israel and Iran, which had conquered Arab islands in the Gulf. But as Senator Jackson indicated, there appears to have been at

least a tacit alliance; more, we may learn some day, if the documentary record is ever revealed. That tripartite relationship continued after the fall of the shah, when the U.S. began, virtually at once, to send arms to Iran via Israel, which were later (and perhaps then) financed by Saudi Arabia. High Israeli officials involved in these transactions revealed that the purpose was to inspire an anti-Khomeini coup and restore the traditional alliance. This was, incidentally, long before there were any hostages. It is one of the many features of the Iran-contra affair suppressed in the congressional-media damage control operation. The same model of overthrowing an unwanted civilian government had been pursued successfully in Indonesia, Chile, and elsewhere, and is, in fact, fairly standard statecraft: if you want to overthrow some government, support its military, hoping to find elements who will do the job for you from the inside.

Notice that in accord with this strategic conception, a peaceful political settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict is not of any great importance and might even be detrimental to U.S. interests. And not surprisingly, we find that the United States has blocked a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict for twenty years.

At that time, there was a policy split, reflected in the dispute between Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger. The Rogers Plan was close to the international consensus of the period, based on UN 242 as interpreted throughout most of the world, with the Palestinians considered only as refugees. Kissinger, as he later explained in his memoirs, preferred "stalemate." The issue came to a head in February 1971, when President Sadat accepted the proposal of UN mediator Gunnar Jarring for a peace settlement along the lines of U.S. official policy (the Rogers Plan). Israel recognized Sadat's proposal as a genuine peace offer, but rejected it. In the United States, Kissinger's position prevailed. Since that time, U.S.-Israeli rejectionism has held with only tactical modifications.

The 1973 war convinced the United States and Israel that Egypt could not simply be dismissed. They therefore moved to the natural fallback position: to remove the major Arab military force from the conflict, so that Israel could proceed to integrate the occupied territories and attack its northern neighbor with increased U.S. backing. This process was consummated at Camp

David. Israel's leading strategic analyst, Avner Yaniv, now writes that the effect of removing Egypt from the conflict was that "Israel would be free to sustain military operations against the PLO in Lebanon as well as settlement activity in the West Bank"—exactly as was obvious at the time.

Meanwhile, it was necessary to deflect other peace initiatives. One major case was in January 1976, when the UN Security Council debated a resolution calling for a two-state settlement, reiterating the wording of UN 242 on "appropriate arrangements . . . to guarantee . . . the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all states in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries." The resolution was proposed by the "confrontation states" (Egypt, Syria, Jordan) and publicly backed by the PLO—in fact, "prepared" by the PLO, according to Israel's UN ambassador, Haim Herzog. It was flatly rejected by Israel and vetoed by the United States. The United States vetoed a similar resolution in 1980 and has barred every serious effort to achieve a diplomatic settlement. In this rejectionist stance, the United States is virtually isolated. The latest UN General Assembly vote (December 1989) was 151–3 (U.S., Israel, Dominica), the NATO allies voting with the majority. The record is long, and it is consistent.

U.S. opposition to an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict is easy to understand: at any such conference, there will be pressure for a diplomatic settlement that the United States opposes. The United States might agree to a conference sponsored by the U.S. and the USSR, on the assumption that Soviet leaders would do virtually anything to gain U.S. support. But unless other countries accept U.S. rejectionism, they must be kept out of the picture, as in Kissinger's day.

The depth of this rejectionist stance was dramatically revealed on January 14, 1991, when France made a last-minute proposal at the UN, calling for immediate Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait in return for a Security Council commitment to deal with the Israel-Palestine problem "at some appropriate moment," which remained unspecified. The United States, with Britain tagging along, announced at once that it would veto any such resolution. The French proposal reiterated the basic content of a Security Council statement in which members expressed their view

that "an international conference, at an appropriate time and properly structured," might help to "achieve a negotiated settlement and lasting peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict." The statement was a codicil to Security Council resolution 681 of December 20, calling on Israel to observe the Geneva conventions. It was excluded from the resolution itself to avoid a U.S. veto. Note that there was no "linkage" to the Iraqi invasion, which went unmentioned. The United States was therefore willing to go to war rather than allow even a hint that there might someday be an international effort to deal with the Israel-Palestine problem. The pretexts advanced need not detain us.

The official U.S. position remains one of support for the "Shamir plan" (actually, the coalition Labor-Likud plan) as the only option on the table. That plan bans an "additional Palestinian state" (Jordan already being one), bars any "change in the status of Judea, Samaria and Gaza other than in accordance with the basic guidelines of the [Israeli] Government," which preclude any meaningful Palestinian self-determination, rejects negotiations with the PLO—thus denying Palestinians the right to choose their own political representation—and calls for "free elections" under Israeli military rule with much of the Palestinian leadership in prison camps. Unsurprisingly, an international conference and diplomacy generally are not policy options.

It is worth noting that the United States was also firmly opposed to a diplomatic settlement of the second major issue that was raised during the Gulf crisis: Iraq's very dangerous military capacities. Here the U.S. rejection of "linkage" was particularly remarkable, since it is beyond dispute that disarmament questions must be addressed in a regional context. Iraq raised the issue several times since August, but all proposals have been rejected or ignored, on the pretext that the United States could not accept "linkage"—in this unique case. Again, we know perfectly well that "linkage" and "rewarding the aggressor" had nothing to do with it. In fact, Saddam Hussein had made a similar proposal in April 1990, when he was still George Bush's friend and ally. He then offered to destroy his chemical and biological weapons if Israel agreed to destroy *its* nonconventional weapons. The State Department rejected the link "to other issues or weapons systems." Note that these remained unspecified. Acknowledgment of the exis-

tence of Israeli nuclear weapons would have raised the question of why all U.S. aid to Israel is not illegal under congressional legislation of the 1970s that bars aid to any country engaged in nuclear weapons development.

There were diplomatic possibilities for resolving the crisis, including Iraqi offers described by high U.S. officials as "serious" and "negotiable." All were rejected out of hand by Washington. Among them was one disclosed by U.S. officials on January 2: an Iraqi offer "to withdraw from Kuwait if the United States pledges not to attack as soldiers are pulled out, if foreign troops leave the region, and if there is agreement on the Palestinian problem and on the banning of all weapons of mass destruction in the region" (Knut Royce, *Newsday*, Jan. 3). U.S. officials described the offer as "interesting" because it dropped any border claims, and "signals Iraqi interest in a negotiated settlement." A State Department Mideast expert described the proposal as a "serious prenegotiation position." The United States "immediately dismissed the proposal," according to Royce.

The next day the *New York Times* reported that Yasser Arafat, after consultations with Saddam Hussein, indicated that neither of them "insisted that the Palestinian problem be solved before Iraqi troops get out of Kuwait." According to Arafat, "Mr. Hussein's statement of August 12, linking an Iraqi withdrawal to an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was no longer operative as a negotiating demand." All that was necessary was "a strong link to be guaranteed by the five permanent members of the Security Council that we have to solve all the problems in the Gulf, in the Middle East and especially the Palestinian cause."

Two weeks before the deadline for Iraqi withdrawal, then, the possible contours of a diplomatic settlement appeared to be these: Iraq would withdraw completely from Kuwait with a U.S. pledge not to attack withdrawing forces; foreign troops would leave the region; and the Security Council would indicate a serious commitment to settle two major regional problems: the Arab-Israeli conflict and the problem of weapons of mass destruction. Disputed border issues would have been left for later consideration. The offers were flatly rejected and scarcely entered the media or public awareness. The United States and Britain maintained their commitment to force alone.

The claim that the United States was unwilling to "reward the aggressor" by allowing future consideration of these two regional issues is undeserving of a moment's attention. The United States commonly rewards aggressors and insists upon "linkage," even in cases much worse than Saddam Hussein's latest crimes. It follows that the reasons presented were not the real ones, and, furthermore, that no reason at all was presented for going to war—none whatsoever.

The real reasons, again, were not obscure. The United States opposed a diplomatic settlement of all the "linked" issues. Therefore, it opposed "linkage," that is, diplomacy. If that meant a devastating war, so be it.

From the outset, the president was clear and unambiguous that *there would be no negotiations*. "Diplomacy" would be limited to delivery of an ultimatum: capitulate or die. It took willful blindness to misunderstand these facts. The reasons had nothing to do with "rewarding aggressors" or "linkage," nor with "annexation" (the United States dismissed at once offers that would have terminated the annexation), nor with the severity of Saddam Hussein's crimes, which had been monstrous before, but of no account. His crimes, furthermore, did not compare with others that the United States and U.K. cheerfully supported, and continue to support today, including the near-genocidal Indonesian invasion and annexation of East Timor, successful thanks to the decisive support of the United States and U.K.—which continues as we speak, with the U.K. now having taken over a leading role as arms supplier to the murderous Indonesian generals. The U.S.-U.K. posturing on this matter has descended to a level of cynicism that is extraordinary even by the standards of statecraft, and it is an astonishing commentary on our intellectual culture that it does not merely inspire ridicule but is even parroted.

These considerations direct us toward the future. I see little reason to expect the United States to modify its goals with regard to oil production and profits or to abandon its rejectionism on the Israeli-Arab conflict. I haven't been talking about Israeli policy, but it is well to recall that the Labor and Likud have been united in their rejectionism since 1967, though they differ on the terms.

Since 1917, the pretext offered for U.S. intervention has been defense against the Russians. Before the Bolshevik revolution, intervention was justified in defense against the Huns, the

British, "base Canadian fiends," or the "merciless Indian savages" of the Declaration of Independence. For the last several years, the Russians have not been available as a pretext. The U.S. invasion of Panama last year kept to the normal pattern but was historic in that it was the first post–Cold War act of aggression; appeal to the Russian threat was beyond the reach of even the most fevered imagination. So the United States was defending itself from narcoterrorism. Little has changed apart from rhetoric.

There are, however, real changes in the world system. By the early 1970s, it was clear that power had diffused considerably within U.S. domains, partly as a result of the Vietnam war, which proved to be quite costly to the U.S. economy and highly beneficial to its rivals, who enriched themselves by their participation in the destruction of Indochina. The world had become "tripolar," to use the fashionable phrase. By the mid-1970s, Soviet military expenditures began to level off, and it was pretty clear that the USSR was in serious trouble. A few years later, it was out of the picture. That collapse has several consequences: (1) at the rhetorical level, new pretexts are needed for intervention; (2) the "end of the Cold War" opens the way to the "Latin Americanization" of large parts of the former Soviet empire; and (3) the elimination of the Soviet deterrent leaves the United States freer than before to use military force.

How, then, can we expect U.S. policy toward the Middle East to adapt to these changed circumstance? There is no reason to expect changes in the principles that guide policy. There are no significant public pressures for policy change. In polls, about two-thirds of the public regularly express support for the international consensus on a two-state settlement, but few have the slightest awareness of U.S. isolation in blocking the peace process, and even such elementary facts as the official U.S. position and the record of diplomacy are rigidly excluded from the media and public discussion. There is, then, little reason to anticipate a shift in U.S. rejectionism.

This is, of course, not a certainty. The tactical divide of twenty years ago still exists in elite circles, and might lead to internal pressures for the United States to join the world community on this matter. If this radical policy shift takes place, hard problems quickly arise.

More likely, in my view, is continued support for the position articulated in February 1989 by Yitzhak Rabin, then defense secretary, when he told a group of Peace Now leaders of his general satisfaction with the U.S.-PLO dialogue, low-level discussions without meaning that would divert attention while Israel used forceful means to crush the Intifada. The Palestinians "will be broken," Rabin promised his interlocuters, and he is probably right. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can endure. If so, then the United States and Israel can continue to assume, as they did forty years ago, that the Palestinians will "turn into human dust and the waste of society," while Russian Jews, now effectively barred from the United States by legislation designed to deny them a free choice, flock to an expanded Israel with U.S. financial support, leaving the diplomatic issues moot.

## *Note*

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