

THE GULF AND A NEW MIDDLE EAST SECURITY SYSTEM

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At rare historical junctures, states grapple with the fundamental problem of international relations: how to create and maintain order in a world of sovereign states. These junctures come at dramatic moments of upheaval and change within the international system, when the old order has been destroyed by war and newly powerful states try to reestablish basic organizing rules and arrangements.¹

– G. John Ikenberry

For over two years, President George W. Bush has maintained that “success in Iraq could also bring a new stage for Middle Eastern peace....”² Reconstruction of Iraq is now the linchpin in the American “forward strategy for freedom” to spread reform, democracy, respect for human rights and prosperity in the broader Middle East and North Africa. More recently, at three major international summits in June 2004 – the Group of Eight, EU-U.S., and NATO – the United States spearheaded efforts to provide greater security assistance for Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the Middle East in the form of military training and additional troop deployments. The summits’ communiqués promised support for change in the Middle East but failed to agree on a vision for a new security system to make the region more

stable and secure.

Meanwhile, the security situation in the region continues to be in a state of flux, and, as should be expected, policy makers and analysts in the Middle East, Europe and the United States are trying to come to terms with the parameters of an emerging order and how to shape it.³ Two critical issues should be analyzed at the outset. The first concerns the ultimate impact of the Iraq War on the security environment in the Middle East. Was the war a “rare historical juncture” changing the fundamental security milieu throughout the entire region?

The second issue centers on whether the current situation warrants the establishment of new security arrangements and what those arrangements should be for promoting long-term peace and stability. Does providing for stability within Iraq depend entirely on domestic developments

and external aid, or does it also require creating a stable security system throughout the rest of the region? In this vein, what is the prospect for creating a multilateral security regime among the states in the region? Historically, alliances and cooperative security institutions have been used to bind both strong and weak states to long-term commitments.⁴ Geopolitical areas most dramatically affected by a war are more likely to be receptive at the end of that war to the idea of establishing new security arrangements that will do a better job of preventing conflict than the previous ones. By extension, areas less affected by war or which continue to be engaged in war are not ready for change and more likely to resist undertaking new security arrangements.

IRAQ: THE LINCHPIN?

On the eve of the war in Iraq, some commentators and strategic experts flirted with the idea that the U.S. invasion of Iraq would send “shock waves” throughout the Middle East and produce wide-ranging effects that could lead to a new security system in the region.⁵ It was argued that a quick military victory followed by a rapid reconstruction effort would start a domino effect that somehow would transform the region’s states into pluralist democracies or at least catalyze economic and governance reform. While such sentiments ring of hyperbole, if not outright wishful thinking, the new environment has caused many in the region to reassess their current security arrangements.

The overthrow of Saddam’s regime has had little effect on the immediate security situation in the Levant. Neither side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dramatically changed strategy or tactics to resolve the fundamental conflict, and

consequently the violence continues unabated. If anything, Washington’s preoccupation with Iraq left little room for helping the parties reduce the hostility and adhere to the U.S.-led Roadmap. Concurrently, establishment of a moderate government in Iraq is a strategic gain for Israel. The threat that Saddam posed to Israel in the form of weapons of mass destruction and missiles (Israel was hit by 39 Iraqi missiles in 1991) is gone. A strong U.S. military presence in the region is also considered a plus in Israeli eyes. But most Israelis do not expect a new moderate Iraqi government to be friendly towards them and reckon that Iraq will follow the lead of other Arab Gulf states in normalizing relations with Israel.

Syria – another 1991 Arab coalition partner that sat on the sidelines in 2003 – also has not changed its position very much, despite pressure from the United States to cease its interference with reconstruction efforts in Iraq, its support for terrorism, and its proliferation activities. Jordan, which has been pursuing a program of political and economic reform for several years, is likely to benefit economically from a more stable Iraq. Regime change in Baghdad is less likely to have a serious effect on Jordan’s own domestic politics than events emanating from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile, Jordan is now the second-largest recipient of U.S. aid, a reward for continued cooperation in the war on terrorism as well as Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Farther afield, the latest war in the Gulf has had minimum impact on North Africa. Libya’s December 2003 decision to get out of the WMD business was based upon many factors. While the fate of Saddam may have focused Tripoli’s attention,

Libya's recent renunciation should be seen as part of a three-year campaign by Colonel Qadhafi to get Libya out from under international sanctions and improve the economy. Tunisia has not made significant strides towards political reform. Meanwhile, Algeria and Morocco are as far apart as ever on the differences that divide them, and their economies remain stagnant. The conflict with the Polisario has taken a major step backward with the departure of James Baker as the U.N. special envoy to the Western Sahara dispute.

Reemergence of Libya as a state in good standing (i.e., not under any sanctions) with full normal relations with the United States may be enough of an upheaval to cause a reexamination of the security structure in the Western Mediterranean. This might lead to the transformation of the five-plus-five talks between North Africa and Southern Europe into a unique security system for that subregion. Such a system would be squarely based on the geoeconomic dynamics of the Maghreb itself, with little connection to the concerns of Gulf monarchies, Iraqis or Iranian leaders.

The geographic area most affected by the war in Iraq is the Gulf. Gone is the balance-of-power security system entwined in the policies of dual containment put into place in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. U.S.-led Operations Southern Watch and Northern Watch and the Maritime Interdiction Force Operations have ended. With a new "sovereign" government in Baghdad focusing on democratic elections, reconstruction, economic development and domestic stability, Iraq is no longer capable of fielding a 400,000-man army to balance Iranian hegemony. Meanwhile, Iran is surrounded by nine countries favorably inclined towards the United States while

facing near universal scrutiny of its nuclear program. The Pentagon is planning to change the complexion of U.S. military forward presence in the Gulf. The American military in Saudi Arabia has virtually disappeared, and the kingdom is facing unprecedented threats and violence against the current government. Most of the moderate Arab states in the Gulf are reassessing their external-security priorities and embarking on domestic reforms.

The threat posed by Saddam's regime to neighboring moderate Arab states has been eliminated. Those states are now grappling with the prospect of having either a moderate, Shi'ite-dominated state at their doorstep or perhaps the emergence of civil war and three new states if Iraq disintegrates. In either case, no longer facing a looming threat from the north, Southern Gulf states can devote more energy to addressing other potential dangers to the region in the form of an unpredictable Iran, radical groups intending to overthrow their governments and commit acts of terrorism, and sundry transnational security problems in the form of environmental disasters, economic stagnation, demographic pressures and political unrest.

Iran is the single state in the region most affected by the overthrow of the Saddam regime (other than Iraq itself, of course). Gone is the imminent threat that Saddam, with or without weapons mass destruction, posed to Iran. In the 1980s, Iran lost hundreds of thousands of people, including some by chemical weapons, in the war instigated by Iraq. Gone, too, is one of the principal reasons for the Iranian WMD programs. More recently, Iraq hosted opposition groups to the regime in Tehran. That Iraq constitutes a balance against Iranian hegemonic inclinations is

the result of the U.S. Army rather than Saddam sitting in Baghdad for the next couple of years.

Should reconstruction in Iraq fail, the area most affected will be the Gulf, along with Jordan. As we saw in Lebanon in the 1980s and Afghanistan in the 1990s, the chaos that consumes a failed state tends to undermine the stability of the surrounding states, pulling down their economies and creating overwhelming refugee problems. At a minimum, the United States will continue to be a guarantor of Iraqi external or sovereign security, along with the security of the states of the GCC and other Gulf neighbors, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Yemen, for years to come. Even when the U.S. military presence in the Gulf monarchies goes back to a pre-1990, over-the-horizon posture of less than 10,000 troops (but one that is more reliant on in-region pre-positioned stocks and so-called “warm bases” for ramping up quickly), the bedrock of GCC and Iraqi security will remain the bilateral agreements between individual Gulf states and the United States.

A NEW STRATEGY

Concerns about internal stability and external aggression throughout the Middle East are prompting the development of a new round of “comprehensive strategies” for economic development, reform and security enhancement for the entire Middle East, which is sometimes defined narrowly as states lining the Southern Mediterranean, all countries from Morocco to Iran, or broadly encompassing all Arab League members, Israel, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The G-8’s “Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and

North Africa” is just one example of pan-regionalism. The European Union is considering the establishment of a regional conflict-prevention center for the Middle East. Some proponents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would like to expand that group to include all or parts of the Middle East. Another proposal suggests expanding NATO to include Iraq, Egypt, Israel and Jordan.⁶ The Danish and Canadian governments are jointly seeking Middle East sponsorship for a pan-regional “charter” based on cooperative security principles and conduct, originally drafted in a Track Two forum.⁷ These initiatives would join a host of ongoing activities, including the EU’s Barcelona Process, NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, and the OSCE’s Mediterranean Partnership initiative.

Such pan-Middle East strategies have a single major problem: they don’t work. The Middle East is an area marked more by its diversities than its commonalities. It has numerous interstate rivalries limited to distinct locales, lacks a common norm of cooperation and effective pan-regional institutions, has a dearth of interregional economic interactions, lacks many cultural commonalities and comprises states with greatly varying threat perceptions and interests. That the war in Iraq had virtually no effect on the Levant and North Africa while the Gulf was greatly affected is emblematic of the lack of uniformity in regional security. Further, without significant progress in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it will be difficult for Arab parties to focus on the vast array of regional security problems and domestic reforms in any pan-regional forum with Israelis present.

Pan-regional security approaches should be abandoned in favor of tailored

subregional strategies. Indeed, the concept of the Middle East as a geopolitical determinant should be minimized. The strategy proposed here is based on a comprehensive approach for dealing with distinct sets of security problems and reforms throughout the region. Grouping security issues by subregions makes those issues more manageable as parties in smaller geographical areas tend to have a lot more in common and are more inclined towards crafting solutions unique to their subregion.

This subregional strategy would promote tailored security arrangements for three main security zones: the Western Mediterranean (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Southwest Europe), the Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey) and the Gulf (GCC states, Iran, Iraq, Yemen). The key to this plan is that, to the greatest extent possible, the core security concerns of the GCC states, Yemen, Iraq and Iran are de-linked from the often dissimilar issues concerning other Arab states. At the same time, the strategy would make a concerted effort to resolve the sole dispute that affects the entire Middle East region: the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Addressing subregional security problems and fostering cooperative arrangements in each subregion have generally taken a backseat to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in U.S. Middle East security policy. Most recently, this pan-regional approach doomed the Middle East Peace Process working group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS), which met from January 1992 until September 1995.⁸ ACRS was one of five multilateral negotiations set up to support the bilateral peace process between Israel and its immediate neighbors.

Unlike the bilateral talks, ACRS focused on issues affecting long-term security in the region. But its attempt to be comprehensive was made more difficult by the intentional exclusion of Libya, Iran and Iraq, and by the refusal by Syria and Lebanon to participate. Also, parties from the Maghreb and Gulf often complained that the working group was neglecting their local security concerns in the U.S.-led effort to arrive at region-wide agreements. When the working group sought to establish a Regional Security Center in Jordan for the entire Middle East, Tunisia and Qatar unexpectedly stepped up to host additional centers for their subregions. Ultimately, failure to reach a timely comprehensive settlement on the Arab-Israeli conflict, coupled with failure to find a mechanism to accommodate subregional interests and address region-wide problems like WMD, ended the ACRS process. The lesson from ACRS is that one-size-fits-all processes do not work in the Middle East.

To avoid a repetition of the ACRS experience, the subregional strategy proposed herein provides a geopolitical firewall behind which the Gulf and Western Mediterranean states can insulate themselves from becoming bogged down in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict while seeking to address their own local security concerns. The Levant as a subregion presents its own unique problems that generally cannot escape the Arab-Israeli conflict. Likewise, the Levant — specifically resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict — should not be held hostage to progress on issues in the other zones.

The key to the subregional strategy for the Middle East is making a concerted effort to address the security situation in each zone simultaneously. This recognizes

that there are issues within the subregions that have an impact upon and involve multiple parties across subregions. At the same time, there are issues requiring pan-regional solutions. Four issues fit this bill: the Arab-Israeli dispute, the establishment of a WMD-free zone, Iraqi reconstruction, and international terrorist organizations. Failure to make progress in addressing these issues will limit the enhancement of security within the three security zones.

It is also important not to go overboard in focusing on one subregion. Such imbalances have proven to be a recipe for disaster. In 1981 and 1982, while the United States focused on the Gulf, the crisis in Lebanon was allowed to escalate until the United States became directly involved in the war.⁹ The administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton threw support behind the Madrid and Oslo processes while promulgating the strategy of “dual containment” in the Gulf for dealing with Iran and Iraq. At first this decoupling appeared to work. But over time an imbalance developed between the Gulf and Levant strategies. The military, through the U.S. Central Command, had the lead for dealing with the Gulf, while the State Department focused on the higher-priority peace process between Israel and Jordan, Syria and the Palestinians. Consequently, Gulf security strategy was allowed to center on military initiatives oriented toward maintaining the status quo and making sure that Gulf problems did not distract diplomatic efforts from the Israeli-Arab conflict.

THE GULF ENVIRONMENT

Of the three subregions in the Middle East, the Gulf is the most ripe for new security arrangements. It is closest to the

epicenter of the Iraqi war and therefore most affected by the war’s shock waves. The security order prior to March 2003 was not able to prevent the war and is currently inadequate for assisting the reconstruction in Iraq. New arrangements are urgently needed to provide a stable security environment in which post-Saddam Iraq can develop economically, become culturally integrated, and build its democratic institutions during the next 20 years without becoming bogged down in another Gulf conflict. Further, a new security system is needed to encourage the development of an Iraq with external relations based on security cooperation rather than hegemonic designs. Finally, the Gulf is now facing the very real prospect of an Iran armed with nuclear weapons.

A new security system does not necessitate abandoning elements in the current Gulf system. The United States emerged from the war even more entrenched as the most powerful state in the Gulf. Those arrangements instrumental to the United States for safeguarding the Gulf and the flow of oil should stay. Both the United States and individual GCC states appear to be well served by existing bilateral security agreements, even though the demise of the Iraqi threat removes one of the driving factors behind these collective defense arrangements. The United States has ready access to military bases in several Gulf states that share or carry the entire financial burden for the deployment of U.S. troops and pre-positioned equipment. The GCC states receive the protection of U.S. conventional and nuclear umbrellas. Smaller GCC states, in varying degrees, also rely upon their relationship with the United States to balance larger states in the region, including Saudi Arabia.

For the foreseeable future, the bedrock of Gulf security will remain bilateral agreements with the United States. The collective alliance among the GCC states, as embodied in Peninsula Shield forces, is in no position to provide for the security of the Gulf; nor is it likely to develop very much so long as the reliance on the United States remains. The military strategy for the United States in the Gulf will be to assure GCC partners of U.S. commitment to their survival, to dissuade and deter Iran from taking military steps against the Arab Gulf states and shipping, and to prevail in any conflict in the Gulf. Thus the purview of the United States has expanded to being the guarantor of sovereign security for Iraq, the GCC states, and various neighbors, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Yemen.

Notwithstanding efforts to create a stable domestic situation within Iraq, current policies do not go nearly far enough in transforming the Gulf security environment in order to sustain a new legacy of peace. There are potential destabilizing elements in the milieu that necessitate shaping a new order adequate to addressing those elements for all states in the broader Gulf-Arabian Sea area. Transnational and cross-border threats short of interstate conflict are a major concern. At the top of the list is the threat from extremists, followed by proliferation of WMD, organized crime, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, money laundering, and health and environmental disasters (including pandemics, water shortages, desertification and earthquakes).

Each transnational threat poses severe consequences for the region's stability and that of individual states in the Gulf. Most transnational threats cannot be addressed

by military solutions or through bilateral alliances with the United States. They demand direct cooperation among the states of the region at various levels, including the political, military, law-enforcement, intelligence, customs, engineering, and scientific. Thus, ideally, the departure of Saddam Hussein together with the extension of the American security guarantee to Iraq should stimulate creative thinking about new institutions, relationships and ways to augment current arrangements in the Gulf to enhance security and cooperation.

FLAWS IN CURRENT APPROACH

Despite the benefits the United States and the GCC states derive from their longstanding bilateral arrangements, this system is now lacking in some significant ways. First, the system is not as stable as the United States would prefer. Saudi Arabia, in response to domestic political pressures, ended America's 12-year troop presence and limited access to the Prince Sultan Air Base, a move that resulted in the U.S. seeking multiple alternative basing agreements in order to reduce reliance on any particular Gulf state. In general, the United States needs to be concerned about domestic factors within Gulf states becoming a stronger determinant in the shaping of future collective security arrangements. Public dissatisfaction with the United States is increasing, spurred on by the Iraq War and its aftermath, support for Israel, the perceived ill-treatment of Arabs in the United States, and the alleged propping up of authoritarian Gulf regimes. Anti-Americanism is at a pitch that has never before been seen. Moreover, as the threat from Iraq recedes, the GCC states may, over time, reconsider their heavy reliance on the United States for security, and the

American public may be less inclined to support a large troop presence in the Gulf.

Second, as much as the United States has sought to reassure the Arab Gulf states that it is a reliable and enduring partner, it has not articulated a new vision for keeping its forces in the post-Saddam Gulf. This adds to the longstanding insecurities of regional parties. Saudi Arabia's secret acquisition of ballistic missiles from China in 1986 and its cryptic interests in Pakistan's nuclear program are two examples of how Riyadh has sought to hedge its bets.¹⁰ The pending U.S. draw-down of its military presence in the Gulf sometime in the next five years is likely to increase regional insecurities. This in turn may cause the GCC states to reexamine their own defense capabilities. Such a reexamination will have to assess, on the one hand, the likelihood that chaos may ensue in Iraq after the United States leaves and, on the other hand, the necessity for strong collective defenses if Iraq becomes pacified.

Third, the U.S.-Gulf-state alliances need to adapt to changing security relations in the Gulf. Although GCC members have differing views about getting too engaged with Iraq and Iran, relations are moving from outright hostility to peaceful adjustment. There is now a hesitant engagement with both Iraq and Iran.¹¹ Nevertheless, Iraq and Iran lack any formal mechanism to engage with the GCC or its individual member states on a regular basis. Indeed, no forum exists where all the countries of the region, the United States, and other interested parties can address their concerns in one body.

Fourth, there are no mechanisms for bringing Iraq into the fold of GCC security partnerships. Investing Iraq in the GCC can be important for helping Iraq make the

transition from a state with hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf to a status quo power. This is especially important to Kuwait, given the long-unresolved territorial issues between the two sides. Currently, there is no consensus within the GCC monarchies for offering membership in the GCC to an embryonic, democratic Iraq. Reasons for opposing membership vary from one state to another. Some oppose opening the Sunni-dominated organization to a Shiite-dominated Iraq. Others fear expanding the GCC just when cooperation among current members is taking off. It is uncertain how immutable these views may be, especially once Iraq obtains a stable government.

Fifth, strong reliance on the United States has become an impediment to the development of long-term strategic planning capabilities by the GCC, despite continued American urging that the regional states need to enhance their security arrangements. Only recently have we seen the GCC states resolve some of their differences and increase bilateral security interactions. The twenty-fourth summit of the GCC, held in December 2003, displayed a new era of cooperation, particularly in the area of counterterrorism. GCC members agreed to undertake efforts to strengthen security coordination and information and intelligence exchanges. The summit also reached an accord to implement significant educational reforms, including the removal of radical rhetoric from academic textbooks.¹² But there was a host of other security issues on the agenda on which no progress was achieved. Even the issue of cross-border counterterrorism cooperation ("hot pursuit") stalled.

Sixth, it should be pointed out that some in the Gulf do not feel their security

situation has changed significantly. For them, five events would define the dramatic onset of a new security order: a just and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israel-Syria conflicts; the elimination of Israel's "unsafeguarded" nuclear program; Iranian compliance with its nonproliferation agreements and improved relations with the United States; Iran's return of the three disputed islands to the UAE; and the establishment in Iraq of a stable, moderate regime supported by Sunnis. The latter two concerns can be directly dealt with by Gulf subregional initiatives, while the former three require a wider Middle East mechanism (and significant policy innovation by the United States) to succeed.

A LAYERED SYSTEM

To address the above problems, a new security order should be created in the Gulf by building additional layers to the current security system, with a greater emphasis on multilateral cooperation. U.S.-Gulf-state bilateral cooperation and the GCC would serve as the base layer. But these relations should be strengthened in the new order for tighter coalition-based military integration, fully institutionalized by the time the United States moves to an over-the-horizon posture. With a smaller U.S. troop presence, regular command-post exercises and military exercises using pre-positioned equipment will become more important to Gulf security. The GCC should enhance efforts for joint operations through a better command, control and communications infrastructure and facilitate greater information and intelligence sharing for early warning of potential threats. This enhanced capability should also be leveraged to address a broad range of transition

threats. Enhancement of the GCC collective security system will aid the integration of individual Gulf military forces with those of the United States.

The next layer should comprise a formal arrangement between the GCC and Iraq that someday might lead to the incorporation of Iraq into the GCC, perhaps akin to NATO's Partnerships for Peace for the states of the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union. This GCC-plus-one layer is an important innovation as it could provide a mechanism for engaging Iraq as a prospective equal in the GCC, thereby enmeshing the new Iraqi government in a stable collective defense regime. At the same time, the special relationships already forged between the GCC and Yemen, Egypt and Jordan should continue to the degree that these states contribute to the security and stability of the Gulf.

The final layer would be the broadest and most multilaterally oriented. It involves setting up a new security organization that could be called the Gulf Regional Security Forum (GRSF).¹³ Southern and Northern Gulf states, without exception, would be the core members, together with extra-regional states and organizations with a vested interest in the Gulf. It would have its own unique features but should draw from the experiences of other multilateral regional forums, particularly the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the OSCE.¹⁴

Initial goals for the GRSF would be to promote an environment in the Gulf based on dialogue, with the aim of reducing tensions and enhancing cooperation against transnational threats. Shipping safety, oil cleanup, earthquake-hazard mitigation, and sea-accident and drug-traffic prevention are just some of the issues for the forum's agenda. In establishing norms for Gulf

relations, a code of conduct or charter for security cooperation should be considered. The forum should seek to expand military-to-military confidence-building measures that have been pioneered between Oman and Iran, as well as other measures to enhance trust. Eventually, this forum could engage in changing the “hard security” milieu by managing conventional-arms proliferation and possibly establishing a WMD-free zone in the Gulf. It could even serve as a springboard for a common economic zone and other cooperative initiatives.

The GRSF may add others to the forum as needed. This might involve Gulf neighbors such as Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan when focusing on interregional issues such as terrorism, water distribution, drug trafficking or WMD control.

Reflecting the political and security complexities of the Gulf security environment, the new Gulf order will probably involve an assortment of security relationships, including balance of power, bilateral alliances, collective security, and cooperative security. This layered security system would wrap the Gulf parties in a web of interlinked security arrangements that could be adapted or expanded as necessary. Regional parties themselves would principally determine the degree of formality of each layer. As we have seen in the development of the ARF and OSCE, it is better to start small and with flexible arrangements rather than hardened, formal structures. More important, the new order will increase the interactions between parties in the region, thereby building new bureaucracies and constituencies within each state to support cooperative multilateral initiatives. Such interactions are useful for developing the institutional capacity that can oppose policies advocating either

confrontation or inertia.

EXTRA-REGIONAL PARTIES

Involving extra-regional states with a stake in a peaceful and stable Gulf – most notably the United States, Europe, South Asia and China – will be important for obtaining long-term stability. Their geographical proximity to the Gulf, growing dependence on Gulf oil, importance to counterterrorism and nonproliferation, and abiding proclivities to be a partner with the United States on global problems all point to the need for including them in a stable structure in that subregion.

The Europeans can be particularly instrumental in fostering multilateral cooperation as a new layer to the Gulf security system. Such cooperation could cover a broad range of initiatives, ranging from the military to the economic and diplomatic. On the ground, these include patrolling the Gulf as part of the Global War on Terrorism and Proliferation Security Initiative, nation-building assistance to Iraq, outreach to Iran, and promotion of free trade and investment.

NON-OFFICIAL DIALOGUES

Track Two or informal, non-binding dialogues and activities involving both regional and extra-regional representatives should be an integral part of each subregional strategy. Track Two activities have proven to be valuable tools in promoting regional security and reforms in the Middle East and elsewhere.¹⁵ The Oslo process between Israelis and Palestinians grew out of private dialogue sponsored by Norway. In the Asia-Pacific region, Track Two serves as a recognized stepping-stone to formal negotiations for states not prepared to engage regional counterparts in official

ASEAN regional forum settings. It is also an incubator for new ideas that can be channeled into the official proceedings; it has served as a bridge to establishing new negotiations when no other forms of dialogue are available. Most significant, Track Two activities broaden the constituency for peace and reform by engaging a larger audience of officials and non-officials.

Another level of activity would involve the establishment of a network of strategic study centers in each Gulf country. Such a network could expand exchanges among regional parties and help develop further strategies for cooperation. During the last year, there has been an upsurge of Track Two activities in the Gulf, focusing on a host of problems facing the subregion. But many of these activities are one-time meetings that fail to provide continuing or routine contacts. Thus, the United States, the EU, the Gulf states and private foundations should provide regular funding (about \$5 million per annum) to maintain and expand current Track Two activities.

WIDER MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

Not all threats or opportunities facing the GCC states, Yemen, Iraq and Iran are located within the Gulf itself. The continued war of attrition in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, broadcast over the airwaves of newly independent Arab media outlets, directly fuels resentment in Gulf populations against their own governments for cooperating with the United States. Further, Israel's unsafeguarded nuclear program and long-range missile-delivery systems are regarded as a direct threat or security concern to some Gulf states. Silence about Israel's programs illustrates the selective character of the current nonproliferation regimes, in which tremendous pressure is

put on Iran and Arab states not to acquire WMD. Efforts to address both of these highly contentious and ideologically charged issues will require a wider Middle East focus that addresses the shared concerns of the three subregions.

Wider Middle East security concerns of the Gulf Arab states should not be dismissed or minimized by local regimes as excuses to oppose reform. While the conflict raged in the Levant during the last three years, the Gulf Arab states embarked on programs of domestic reform because they saw this to be in their own interest. But they prefer to undertake such reforms in a stable domestic atmosphere. Palestinian issues, particularly the status of Jerusalem, resonate deeply in the bodies politic of all Arab states. Gulf governments fear future public outbreaks, similar to those never seen before in the Gulf at the start of the Palestinian al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 and when the United States receded from the peace process after the Camp David talks failed in July 2000. Daily images of the conflict on al-Jazeera satellite network and other Arab media outlets also deepened ties among Arabs with the Palestinian cause. So, while resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be years away, what the Arab Gulf states want most is for Washington to demonstrate that it is actively working to end the violence and keeping both parties on track towards a final settlement. As the United States focuses on the Gulf, it should continue to work forthrightly on this fundamental security problem in the wider Middle East.

The other issue is the establishment of a WMD-free zone. Recently, Syria, Egypt, Iran and Libya renewed calls for such a zone, citing major changes in the strategic

landscape since the end of major combat in Iraq. These changes include the confirmed elimination of Iraq's WMD program, tighter international monitoring of Iran's nuclear program, Libya's corroborated efforts to get out of the WMD business, and the ferreting out of Pakistan's extensive black-market nuclear trade. They argue that now is the time to lock in these gains through a mutually verifiable WMD-free zone. All states in the wider Middle East strongly argue that Israel should not be given a pass by the United States when it comes to proliferation, and that ignoring Israel's program demonstrates a double standard in U.S. nonproliferation policy towards the region.

All Middle East states have endorsed in principle the establishment of such a zone. Israel has stated that it is prepared to deal with the issue "in the context of a comprehensive, lasting and stable peace," and together with Jordan codified this endorsement in their 1994 peace treaty. But the ongoing crisis with the Palestinians has made most Israelis more cautious about giving up the nuclear option.¹⁶ Nevertheless, changes in the Gulf and North Africa proliferation scenes offer a unique opportunity to explore "preconditions" for negotiating a WMD-free zone and even taking embryonic steps towards one. Such an exploration need not await resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The history of arms control demonstrates that truly thorny issues take years of negotiations to work out and may be put into place only after the fundamental security conflicts have been resolved. Focusing U.S. energy on an issue like a WMD-free zone that resonates throughout the region might augment efforts to address other security issues and reforms, especially at a time

when little progress is being made on the other major pan-regional issue, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

CONCLUSION

Establishing a new security order in the Gulf should be part of a comprehensive strategy for enhancing security and promoting reform in the Middle East. It would be part of a balanced subregional approach separating Middle East security problems into three geographical groupings – Western Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, and Gulf – in order to arrive at distinct solutions appropriate for each subregion and limit the spread of problems beyond the subregions. At the same time, those problems that are pan-regional in nature and have a direct bearing on political decisions in all of the subregions need to be addressed. The Arab-Israeli peace process and establishing a WMD-free zone top the list of regional concerns. Progress in either area would go a long way toward facilitating new security arrangements and reform initiatives.

More than the other subregions, the Gulf stands at a historical juncture with regard to its security arrangements. The replacement of the Saddam regime with a stable and domestically oriented government, together with the upcoming draw-down of U.S. forces in the Gulf, necessitates a reexamination of the entire security order in that part of the Middle East. What is presented here is a comprehensive approach to the security of both the Gulf and the wider Middle East that includes a web of new security institutions and activities. Multilateral security cooperation should be given greater stature, in addition to balance-of-power politics, enhanced alliances, and collective-security measures.

None of these ideas challenges the primacy of the United States as the guarantor of Gulf security. To the contrary, these create new layers of security arrangements to enhance security and cooperation in the Gulf, especially by encompassing the new Iraq in a web of stable relationships with its neighbors.

Whatever limitations are placed on the United States in the Gulf by these new processes, arrangements and agreements, the litmus test must be their prospective effectiveness in making the Gulf a more peaceful, prosperous and predictable region. If properly handled, a GCC-plus-one Partnership for Peace arrangement could enhance the stability of Iraq and thereby the entire region. Washington may not be so keen on establishing a multilateral forum that brings Iran to the table as an accepted equal at a time when it is determined to treat Iran as a foe to be isolated and

contained. The forum, however, could be useful as a venue where concerns about Tehran's policies can be addressed by Iran's neighbors.

The United States is the only country with the influence to forge a consensus among most Gulf states and to determine Iraq's role in the region. As such, the United States should appoint a special envoy devoted to promoting Gulf security, just as special envoys should be appointed for Eastern Mediterranean security and Western Mediterranean security. Each of these envoys should work closely with the relevant U.S. combatant commands. A fully empowered envoy should also be appointed for bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and Syrians, as well as an envoy for establishing a Middle East WMD-free zone. These five envoys will be the linchpins for bringing about a new security order throughout the Middle East.

¹ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory*, (Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 3.

² President Bush discusses the future of Iraq, Washington Hilton, February 26, 2003. Also see "Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," November 6, 2003.

³ See James A. Russell, "Searching for a Post-Saddam Regional Security Architecture," MERIA, March 2003, and Fariborz Mokhtari, "Security in the Persian Gulf: Is a Security Framework Possible?" *American Foreign Policy Interests*, February 2004, pp. 1-10.

⁴ Ikenberry, p. xi.

⁵ *Jerusalem Report*, March 10, 2003, p. 20.

⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, "Expanding Club NATO," *The New York Times*, October 26, 2003.

⁷ Peter Jones, "Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East: Issues and Options," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, December 1998.

⁸ For background on ACRS, see Michael D. Yaffe, "Promoting Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East," Disarmament Forum, Spring 2001, pp. 9-25.

⁹ Abraham Ben-Zvi, "American Middle East Policy under the Bush Administration: The Dilemma of Linkage," *Tel Aviv Notes*, No. 13, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, February 28, 2001.

¹⁰ Richard L. Russell, "Saudi Nukes," *The Washington Times*, January 5, 2004.

¹¹ Judith S. Yaphe, "Arabian Gulf Impressions," Institute for National Strategic Studies, January 12, 2004.

¹² Eurasia Security Watch, No. 12, December 31, 2003.

¹³ Kenneth M. Pollack suggests a different variation called a 'Gulf Security Condominium,' see his article "Securing the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2003, pp. 2-16.

¹⁴ Joseph McMillan, Richard Sokolsky, and Andrew C. Winner, "Toward a New Regional Security Architecture," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2003, pp. 167-170; and Jones, op. cit.

¹⁵ See Yaffe, "Promoting Arms Control and Regional Security," for a list of Track Two activities.

¹⁶ Only 25 percent of Israelis support giving up the nuclear option; see Craig Nelson, "Israel's Ambiguity on Weapons Persists Amid Lack of Pressure," *The Washington Times*, January 28, 2004.