



## **TOWARDS A TRANSATLANTIC STRATEGY FOR THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST**

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The question posed to this panel is a direct one: Can there be a transatlantic strategy for winning the peace in the greater Middle East? I believe the answer to that question is a resounding “yes”. I want to use my time to discuss the most important features of such a strategy and the modalities for implementing it.

### **An Idea Whose Time Has Come**

I would note at the outset that the idea of a transatlantic strategy focusing on the greater Middle East is not new or exclusively a product of the September 11 attacks.

- In the United States, well before the 9/11 attacks, distinguished groups of Americans, organized into task forces and study groups by institutions such as the Council on Foreign Relations and the Atlantic Council, argued that the United States needed to draw Europe more deeply and purposively into a global strategic partnership. The purpose of such a partnership would be to address the major strategic challenges of the post-Cold War world; the greater Middle East certainly registered high on the list of those challenges.
- Similarly, in the early days of the Bush Administration, far-sighted officials like Richard Haass argued that the transatlantic agenda had become a largely non-European agenda, in terms of the issues most urgently requiring attention.

- In Europe, too, there has been a steady increase in focus on stabilization and transformation of the greater Middle East as both urgent and long-term security imperatives.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, it appeared that the United States and Europe might be moving to operationalize the idea of a transatlantic strategy to deal with terrorism, which held out the promise of a common strategy for the greater Middle East. NATO invoked Article V for the first time in its history, and provided various types of military assistance during Operation Enduring Freedom. Our transatlantic partners were strongly supportive of the early efforts, culminating in the Bonn Conference, to stand up a post-Taliban Afghan Interim Authority. They offered substantial help with the challenges of post-conflict stabilization and peacekeeping, and pledged substantial assistance to the process of economic reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration was unprepared to pick up on these offers of support and partnership in a constructive way, which stymied the establishment of a common strategic framework for prosecuting the war on terror; the belated “NATO-izing” and expansion of the International Security Assistance Force to cover Afghanistan beyond Kabul, while tactically useful, did not in itself reverse this strategic mistake. The problem was compounded by the Administration’s maladroitness handling of the diplomacy leading up to the war in Iraq and its willful failure to plan for post-Saddam realities. As a result of these blunders, we prevented a common strategy for the greater Middle East from taking shape at precisely the point where our common bonds and interests could not have been more compelling.

## **Basic Elements**

At this juncture, what might a transatlantic strategy for the greater Middle East look like? Earlier speakers have already recommended a number of essential elements, which I strongly endorse. It seems obvious that we need a common effort to win the peace in Iraq; I would add that we also need a common effort to finish the job that the United States and its international partners started in such promising fashion in Afghanistan.

It seems equally obvious that we need a renewed effort to achieve a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to achieve this as a transatlantic project. If I may be permitted a personal digression, I would like to note that I am proud of the role I played, as the National Security Council’s point man on Arab-Israeli issues, in helping launch the Quartet in Madrid in April 2002; as long as I was in the Administration, I worked to defend the Quartet against those who wanted to keep the Palestinian issue off the transatlantic agenda. It is regrettable that the Administration has let the Quartet and the effort to implement the Quartet’s roadmap for achieving a two-state solution fall into such a poor state.

A transatlantic strategy for securing the greater Middle East must include a revived roadmap—revived both in the tactical and operational sense, but also revived at a strategic level, through the inclusion of a clearer picture of the end state we seek. The features of such a clearer picture are well-known: they were spelled out by President Clinton in his speech to the Israel Policy Forum; they have been captured in the Ami Ayalon-Sari Nusseibeh Statement of Principles, which now has close to 200,000 Israeli and Palestinian signatories; and they have been reflected in the so-called Geneva Initiative. I think that the gist of a clearer picture of the endgame can be boiled down to three basic propositions: the June 1967 borders should be the starting point for negotiating final boundaries between Israel and Palestine, Jerusalem must be a shared city that functions as the capital of both states, and there will be no effective large-scale right of return for Palestinian refugees to the state of Israel. Without incorporating these propositions into a transatlantic strategy for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we will simply allow this bloody and destabilizing conflict to continue to fester in the heart of a region vital to both European and American national security interests.

Beyond Iraq and the Palestinian issue, we need a strategy for dealing with the threats of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the region. Iran looms large here, but I would argue that, in the context of the war on terror, we must develop similar strategies for dealing with other problematic states in the region, including Syria and Libya. We need (if I may use the term) “roadmaps” for addressing the problematic behaviors of these states on terrorism and WMD through hard-nosed carrots-and-sticks diplomatic engagement. The potential for transatlantic cooperation in developing and deploying robust carrots and sticks for engaging problematic states, I would argue, is huge and almost wholly untapped.

Finally, we need a strategy for promoting internal transformation in the region. We need, for example to find ways to encourage democratic change in problematic states like Iran. At the same time, though, we need to find ways to bolster reform efforts in regional states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which have long been strategic partners of the United States and the West more generally.

## **Moving Ahead**

The notion of a transatlantic strategy for the Middle East is something that the Bush Administration has yet to accept in any meaningful way. The Administration’s Middle East Partnership and Trade Initiatives are purely bilateral, between the United States and regional players. The President’s recent call for greater democratization in the region neglected any mention of a role for our European partners. The Administration’s nearly unilateral actions in Iraq, and its refusal so far to correct its course in the ways I identified, underscore the sense that the Administration does not view the greater Middle East as a genuinely transatlantic problem. The Administration’s acquiescence in the Syria Accountability Act, at a time when the European Union is moving to close an Association Agreement with Syria, highlights the lack of transatlantic coordination on key Middle Eastern issues. It is not even clear that the Administration will take full

advantage of the diplomatic opening forged on the Iranian nuclear issue by some of our European friends.

Assuming, though, that Washington became more persuaded of the value of a transatlantic approach to the greater Middle East, it is critical to think through the modalities for implementing such a strategy. We could in theory work each of the elements of a common strategy on its own. But I am skeptical that this approach can succeed on any sustained basis, because of serious operational weaknesses.

- As our experience with the Israeli-Palestinian roadmap shows very clearly, as long as transatlantic cooperation takes place only on an issue-by-issue basis, this Administration can readily shunt aside European participation when transatlantic cooperation is seen as inconvenient or secondary to short-term U.S. political interests at a given moment.
- Moreover, working each element on its own makes it too easy for those in the region who resist progress on one or more elements to make their cooperation contingent on progress on another element (i.e., those who argue that regional states can't reform internally until the Palestinian issue is resolved).

More desirably, we could seek to integrate the various elements of a transatlantic strategy for the greater Middle East into a comprehensive approach. Such an approach would bring together, on a cooperative basis, transatlantic and regionally-based efforts to pursue all the elements of a comprehensive strategy for the greater Middle East: getting Afghanistan and Iraq right, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, fighting terrorism, stopping WMD proliferation, and encouraging internal reform and transformation.

But integrating these efforts requires a genuinely regional forum, something that the Middle East lacks. Compared to other regions, even in developing areas, the Middle East remains the least institutionalized part of the world. The closest thing that the Middle East has to a regional forum is the Arab League, an organization set up in the 1950s to oppose Israel and Western colonialism, and which excludes the major non-Arab states in the region (Iran, Israel, and Turkey).

### **An “OSCE” for the Middle East**

I believe that the development of a truly regional cooperative security mechanism for the greater Middle East is a necessity, both to anchor a transatlantic strategy for this part of the world and to marshal regional parties to deal with the full spectrum of challenges they face. There is a growing appreciation, both within and outside the region, of the need for a regional framework for addressing these challenges; there is also a growing sense that existing transatlantic mechanisms might have something to offer. At least three different approaches have been suggested:

- Some have proposed expanding and/or building on NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, perhaps by including features drawn from the Partnership for Peace experience.
- Given the historic success of the CSCE/OSCE process in Europe, some have advocated extending the OSCE into the Middle East; this approach is favored particularly by American neoconservatives who want to sign up select Arab regimes to the standards of human rights and good governance embodied in the Helsinki process.
- Others have suggested developing an APEC-like mechanism for the region that would focus on economic reform and integration.

I am skeptical that any of these approaches—at least any of them on its own—would do much to advance a common transatlantic agenda for the region.

- Intensifying NATO's outreach to the region might be a constructive initiative, but it would by definition be an initiative aimed at states with which the United States and Europe are already allies. It would do nothing to address the many regional conflicts and tensions afflicting the greater Middle East. Neither would it necessarily help to promote internal reform. Sixty years of strategic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia—as important and valuable as that partnership has been for Western interests—have not in themselves been sufficient to advance serious reform in Saudi Arabia.
- Other approaches focusing only on encouraging internal economic and/or political modernization would simply not be perceived as credible within the region. As much as some outside the region may argue that issues of internal transformation are more critical to the Middle East's future than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or other security-related issues, people in the region have a funny way of deciding for themselves what is important to them. If we ignore what the peoples of the region perceive as important, we will not get very far.

To succeed in advancing a transatlantic strategy for the greater Middle East, we need a cooperative regional security mechanism that would be comprehensive both in its membership and in its agenda. Such a mechanism should be a stand-alone forum for the region, not an extension of existing transatlantic frameworks into the region; at the same time, the United States and its European partners should be co-sponsors of a new Middle Eastern framework.

Although I am not a proponent of extending the OSCE into the Middle East, I strongly believe that the OSCE model provides a sound conceptual basis for a new cooperative security mechanism for the Middle East. The OSCE model rests on two interlinked sets of commitments. One set posits inclusive membership, encompassing states that have outstanding political differences and rooted in a principle of respect for the *legitimate* security interests of all members. The second set of commitments allows for a comprehensive substantive agenda, including political and security disputes among member states and the character of governance and political life within member states.

This is exactly the mix required for a successful cooperative security mechanism in the Middle East.

- For a regional framework to take hold in the Middle East, that framework must encompass all states, including those with which the United States or its European partners have outstanding differences or that the United States considers to be sponsors of terrorism. It must also operate on a principle of respect for the *legitimate* security interests of all members.
- We need a similarly comprehensive approach on substance. To be credible in the region, we must be willing to encompass key regional conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, alongside issues of internal transformation. Similarly, to get international and regional buy in to a definitive resolution of the region's WMD and terrorism challenges, we must allow for discussion of these issues on a region-wide basis. The OSCE's "baskets" approach would facilitate definition of a genuinely comprehensive agenda, enabling us to work simultaneously on the range of challenges facing the region without allowing difficulties on any one issue to hold up work on the others. Moreover, the baskets approach would provide a foundation for transatlantic cooperation and coordination on a common agenda for the Middle East.

Those who believe that we could only include our "allies" in a new regional mechanism or focus only on issues of internal reform ignore the most fundamental lesson of the OSCE experience in Europe. There is no question that establishing norms for human rights helped empower great Europeans to help transform their countries from dictatorship to democracy. But, the former Soviet bloc would never have taken the painful steps necessary for its eventual transformation if its *legitimate* external security concerns were not assured. It was the dual approach of empowering internal agents of change while simultaneously guaranteeing that the West would not use force to alter borders or overthrow regimes that ensured a "soft" landing for Europe, rather than chaos or widespread internecine fighting, at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. We need to apply the same dual approach to advancing a transatlantic agenda for the greater Middle East.

Serious Track II discussions on a notional regional security charter for the greater Middle East, involving regional participants as well as some Europeans and Americans, have explored the application of the OSCE model to the region. These discussions have identified four "baskets" that are indispensable for a cooperative regional security mechanism in this part of the world:

- Human development: This basket would encompass the traditional human rights elements of the OSCE but also deal with issues of political and legal reform, education, tolerance and gender;
- Resources: This basket would focus on fostering greater economic freedoms and linkages but also would craft common approaches to energy and water;
- Security: This would focus on the urgent issues of terrorism and WMD proliferation as well as some of the traditional OSCE arms control issues; and

- Regional crises: This would formally give regional players a role and stake in the successful management and resolution of regional crises, including the Israeli-Palestinian question and the future of Iraq.

This is the kind of cooperative security mechanism that the Middle East needs and that could be a vehicle for advancing a U.S.-European agenda for securing the peace, in the broadest sense of the word, in that part of the world. This is a big idea. But we need big ideas right now—ideas like those put forward by the man whose legacy we honor today. Thank you very much.

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