

its power, prestige, and nuclear weapons program. Across the region, militias and terrorist groups have mobilized to fight American troops in Iraq and used the U.S. presence there as a tool for recruitment and expansion.

With the entire Middle East in flux, we need to look beyond the current debate and begin to formulate a strategic response to this critical part of the world. That's why *Democracy* has undertaken a first for this publication: a symposium about a single question. We asked 50 top progressive foreign policy thinkers—academics, former State Department and National Security Council officials, think tank fellows, and others—about what America should do after Iraq. Certain themes flow through their replies: the need to rebuild our alliances and work in concert with other nations, the importance of restoring American legitimacy in the eyes of those in the region and around the world, and the obligation to move aggressively to wean the country off Middle East oil and gas. To winnow the flood of responses, we chose the ten that we felt offered a unique point of view on this question: Once there is a significant drawdown of troops from Iraq, what comes next? What should American strategy be in the Middle East?

Their answers are on the following pages.

## **Restore Trust in America's Leadership**

*Ivo Daalder & James Lindsay*

**N**o foreign policy decision since America's retreat into isolationism in the 1930s has done more to harm American and global security than the Iraq war. The invasion and incompetently executed occupation have devastated Iraq and unleashed a civil war that has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions. Iraq has become a recruiting cause and training ground for a new generation of terrorists—young men bent on the suicidal destruction of Americans and Iraqis alike. The balance of power within the Middle East has shifted dramatically in favor of the most radical and extremist elements in the region—led by a newly confident Iran. But what has made the war a blunder of truly historic proportions is that it has cost America the trust of its friends and allies around the world—a trust that since 1945 has been instrumental in translating America's economic and military power into global influence and leadership.

The overarching challenge confronting the United States after Iraq, therefore,

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is to restore trust in American leadership. The world needs good reason to once again place its confidence in America's power, policy, and purposes. That will require broad changes in how Washington conducts foreign policy, especially in its willingness to listen to others and practice what it preaches. But to succeed in rebuilding trust, Washington must first contain the problems that the Iraq war has unleashed: the rising violence inside Iraq, the renewed confidence of a newly ambitious Iran, and the ideological gains made by the jihadist terrorist network. Before we build a new house, we have to put out the fire burning down the old one. If we don't, whatever rebuilt trust we enjoy elsewhere will be moot in the Middle East: Even a well-behaved Washington that is once again trusted by friends and allies around the world will have trouble attracting followers if the region spirals into greater instability and violence.

The first and most immediate task facing the United States in the Middle East is to minimize bloodshed within Iraq, provide help to those caught in the crossfire, and prevent instability within the country from spilling across its borders. As much as Americans might wish otherwise, the departure of American soldiers and Marines will likely trigger more fighting, at least in the short term. The flame of sectarian and ethnic warfare has been lit. As the sad histories of the Balkans, Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Sudan show, fires like these are difficult to extinguish and often produce staggering death tolls. Trying to prevent that outcome is not only a moral obligation, but a strategic necessity: American interests can only be harmed if we leave behind an Iraq that collapses into the sort of communal violence that wracked Lebanon in the 1980s and Bosnia in the 1990s.

To avoid that nightmare, any U.S. troop withdrawal must be accompanied by a major, Dayton-like effort that would bring all the parties to the table to negotiate a settlement on key political issues: sharing oil revenue, distributing power between the central government and local political entities, and ensuring a monopoly over the means of violence by abolishing militias—within a fixed timetable (say, one month). At the same time, Washington must be prepared to do everything to help Iraqis caught in the full-scale civil war that will ensue should the peace effort fail; American and other international forces still in the country could establish safe havens inside Iraq to provide security, shelter, and safe transit abroad for those who want to leave.

Washington will also need to take steps to keep Iraq's problems within its borders. Talk that Iraq's troubles will trigger a regional war is overblown; none of the half-dozen civil wars the Middle East has witnessed over the past half-century led to a regional conflagration. But obvious flashpoints exist. Therefore, Washington will need to maintain substantial troops in northern Iraq to reassure the Turks and deter the Kurds from declaring independence. Elsewhere,

the United States will need to use diplomatic tools—as well as the continued presence of troops in the Gulf region—to persuade Iraq’s neighbors to limit their efforts to manipulate the Iraqi civil war to their own ends.

The second challenge the United States faces is to contain Iran’s ambitions and redirect its aspirations. Four years after U.S. troops entered Baghdad, Tehran has emerged the big winner. Saddam Hussein is dead, the limits of American power have been revealed, and Iran’s co-religionists dominate Iraq’s government. It is not surprising, then, that Iran is keen to flex its muscles. The problem is that the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad seeks regional domination, intends to acquire nuclear weapons, and supports terrorists.

The Bush Administration’s policy of working with European allies to press for U.N. sanctions against Iran needs to continue. Iran should pay a price for breaking its obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. But a policy based solely on coercion is guaranteed to fail. Too many countries—led by China and Russia—want economic relations with Tehran for isolation to work. Military strikes are unlikely to end Iran’s nuclear program. They will, however, enrage Iranians, who can easily retaliate against U.S. interests in the region.

**The overarching challenge confronting the United States after Iraq is to restore American leadership.**

As distasteful as it is, then, the United States has to complement its policy of sticks by offering Tehran some substantial carrots. First, there needs to be an unconditional offer to reestablish full diplomatic relations. If the United States could restore diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union 15 years after the October Revolution, it can restore them with Iran 28 years after the Islamic Revolution. Second, Washington should offer to normalize economic ties if Tehran limits its nuclear program and halts support for terrorist groups. Such an offer won’t succeed in buying off Ahmadinejad. Rather, its purpose would be to exploit divisions within Iran and encourage the opposition. The Administration’s open hostility to Iran has enabled Ahmadinejad to deflect domestic criticism of his government’s many missteps and to silence pro-American voices. Supplementing the closed fist with an open hand can help reverse that dynamic.

America’s third challenge will be the same one we have faced since 9/11: stopping jihadist terrorism. The invasion of Iraq has reinvigorated a jihadist threat that was in shambles after the Afghanistan war. Al Qaeda’s recruiting efforts could not have received a bigger boost. At the same time, Iraq is now a training school and testing ground for jihadists. The lessons they learned, such as how to effectively deploy road-side bombs, have already migrated beyond

Iraq, as battle-tested jihadists head home to help spread their knowledge and hatred to others.

Containing and ultimately defeating the jihadist threat will require a mix of strategies. Notwithstanding the Iraq debacle, Washington will occasionally need to use military force to take out jihadi cells training in the mountains of Afghanistan or the wilds of Somalia. But because the next jihadist plot could come just as easily from a neighborhood in Hamburg or Harrisburg, it will be more important for Washington to improve other counterterrorism efforts. In spite (or because) of massive bureaucratic reorganizations, the quality of U.S. intelligence and homeland security efforts remains deeply inadequate. We can and must do much better.

The flip side to trying to stop jihadists is to decrease the number of young Muslims who want to join their fight in the first place. That will require taking active steps to diminish the intense anger many Muslims and most Arabs feel toward the United States. The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq will help, but it will not be enough; minimizing the suffering of Iraqis will also be important. Washington must avoid the appearance of abandoning Iraqis to their fate. To that end, and as painful as it might be in the context of America's ongoing immigration debate, Washington must do much more to help the millions of Iraqis who have been displaced or become refugees as a result of this misbegotten war.

But the most important step toward diminishing Muslim and Arab anger will be to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process. Although the chances that Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be solved any time soon are slim at best, taking Palestinian grievances seriously and pushing both sides to take risks for peace is crucial. It counters the jihadist narrative about America's pernicious role in the Middle East and can turn the public relations tide in favor of the United States. As long as Osama bin Laden can credibly claim that Washington is indifferent to Palestinian suffering, he will have purchase on the Muslim imagination.

Ultimately, America's ability to successfully manage the fallout from Iraq, contain Iran, and defeat the jihadist threat will greatly influence its ability to repair the damage that has been done to its claims of global leadership. But that broader effort will also require far-reaching changes in how Washington operates in the world. A go-it-alone foreign policy will not work. The Bush revolution has made much of the world deeply suspicious of American claims to global leadership. The importance of the elections of pro-American leaders, such as Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Nicolas Sarkozy, for America's ability to regain the trust it has lost overseas is easily overstated; the publics in many allied countries remain deeply skeptical about American motives and values. Unless the United States can demonstrate that it too is willing to abide by the rule of law and work with others on shared global challenges, even friendly

leaders will find it difficult to follow Washington's lead. If that happens, the ultimate costs of the Iraq war will be far more devastating and long-lasting than we currently anticipate. ▀

## Reinvigorate Nuclear Nonproliferation

*Jessica Tuchman Mathews*

**T**he Iraq war's monopoly on America's political energy has now stretched to five years. During what is an eon in a time of fast-moving global change, a number of international security problems have grown, from neglect, into full-blown crises. Unless a major effort is made to reverse current trends, the fissures now spreading across the global nonproliferation regime could easily become the worst of these crises and among the greatest of the war's long-term costs.

Of all the challenges we face, only nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to the United States. Because it is far and away the world's largest conventional military power, the United States would suffer the greatest relative loss in a world of 20 or 30 or more states possessing the "great leveler." And while deterrence still works against states, it does not apply to terrorists with neither populations nor territory to protect. That's why it is imperative for the United States to rescue and then rejuvenate the nonproliferation regime. It is critical to our security interests in the Middle East, a region in which a nuclear arms race could be fatally destabilizing, and throughout the world.

The nonproliferation regime is a massive body of rules, institutions, and trade and technology controls, built around the central pillar of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Now 40 years old, the NPT has kept the number of nuclear states far lower than its authors dared hope. Since the 1960s, many more nations have given up nuclear weapons programs than have started them. There are fewer nuclear weapons in the world today, and fewer nations with nuclear weapons programs, than there were 20 years ago. In 1995, a quarter-century of progress under the treaty was capped by an agreement to transform it from a 25-year commitment to an open-ended one.

The subsequent years were very bad ones, however. In 1998, India and Pakistan each set off a series of nuclear explosions. Though the two were not treaty members, the regime had failed to prevent countries that had fought three wars in rapid succession from crossing the nuclear threshold. Later, the events of

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