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**A TRANSATLANTIC APPROACH  
TO THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT:  
DO WE HAVE ENOUGH IN COMMON?**  
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## CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The United States, Europe, and Prospects for Peace in the Middle East.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Redefining the American Role in the World.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>American and Israeli Strategic Convergence .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Israel and the War against Terrorism .....	11
Toward a New Middle East.....	14
<b>The Pro-Palestinian Advocacy of the EU.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States and the European Union are now working toward the common goal of implementing the Road Map through the Quartet.<sup>1</sup> After the ugly diplomatic brawl over the war in Iraq, however, there are at least four significant obstacles to transatlantic unity as Israel and the Palestinians negotiate the Road Map's implementation. First, the debate over America's role as the lone superpower in the post-September 11 world remains unresolved. Second, above and beyond neoconservative influence, the power of hawkish American Jewish pressure groups, and strong domestic support for Israel, policymakers in Washington have come more and more to share Israel's strategic view of the region since September 11. Third, Europeans continue to distinguish more sharply than Americans between the "terrorism of global reach" attributed to al Qaeda and Palestinian terrorism, which they view as an illegitimate means to the legitimate end of ending occupation and achieving statehood. Finally, because of these issues and their broader historical context, Washington and Brussels have come to accept very different narratives of the so-called Al-Aqsa Intifada. All of these factors reflect a larger reality that threatens to plague transatlantic relations for some time to come: Americans view Israel as an ally on the front lines of a common war against terror, while Europeans see Israeli occupation of and settlement activity in the Palestinian territories as the primary source of Palestinian terrorism and Arab anger toward the West.

In his speech declaring an end to the military phase of the war in Iraq, delivered on May 2, 2003 aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, President Bush left no doubt about the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the larger campaign against Islamist terrorism: "We are committed to freedom in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in a peaceful Palestine."<sup>2</sup> The Taliban's support for al Qaeda, Saddam Hussein's tyranny and support for Islamist terrorism against Israel, and the unchallenged strength of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist groups in the Palestinian territories, the president implied, all constituted obstacles to be overcome in the war against terror. Whereas American-led military action dislodged from power the criminal regimes of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Quartet achieved a peaceful, if partial, regime change in the Palestinian territories, placing the onus of dismantling Palestinian terror organizations upon the new government of Prime Minister Abu Mazen. As if to illustrate the Israeli security dilemma and the challenges facing Mazen, on the same day in April on which Quartet officials delivered the Road Map to the conflict parties, two middle-class British citizens of Pakistani descent went from Gaza to Tel Aviv to blow themselves up at a nightclub not far from the American embassy. Only the trust Israel places in the United States and unequivocal assurances from President Bush of America's commitment to Israeli security made it possible for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to convince his right-wing cabinet to become the first Israeli government to accept the Palestinian aspirations to statehood.

Although the road map has the advantage of pointing the way toward a resolution, its rigid timetables and significant omissions will make it difficult for the Bush administration and its European partners in the Quartet, much less the conflict parties themselves, to agree on how to deal with issues of compliance and reciprocity. An EU confident in American intentions will more readily allow American mediation to proceed without intervening on behalf of a Palestinian leadership unwilling to take necessary action against terrorists. To move this process forward

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<sup>1</sup> The Quartet is a diplomatic working group comprised of representatives from the United States, the EU, Russia, and the UN. It was created in spring 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by President Bush from the USS Abraham Lincoln, May 1, 2003.

successfully, the United States must therefore restore trust to its relationship with the EU by following through on the president's commitment to a revived peace process. For its part, the EU must accept a back seat to Washington when it comes to monitoring security arrangements, certifying Palestinian compliance, and seeking Israeli concessions. The EU must also place all of its weight behind Abu Mazen in his ongoing power struggle with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, whose responsibility for the terrorist war against Israel the EU was too slow to recognize.

The goals of peace between Israel and the Palestinians and stability in the region unite the United States and Europe. These objectives will remain beyond reach without a common transatlantic understanding of the terrorist threat. As in the Cold War, Germany is well positioned to mediate between the United States and France in an effort to forge a common European policy within a strong transatlantic alliance in the war against terror. Germany has skillfully balanced historical solidarity with Israel, condemnation of terrorism, and sympathy for Palestinian suffering and national aspirations over the first two years of the "Second Intifada." The personal friction between President Bush and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder must not undermine the potential for a revitalized security partnership. No matter who is in the White House, the United States must work with a united Europe to create an environment in the Arab world in which terrorists find no safe harbor and the people have hope for a better future.

## THE UNITED STATES, EUROPE, AND PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The removal of Saddam Hussein from power has had ripple effects across the region that serve the interests of peace in the Middle East. Having failed to prevent war in Iraq, the rulers of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are anxious to demonstrate to their people that they can address their most pressing foreign policy concern—an end to Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The war has also cast a long shadow on the region's other state sponsors of terrorism, Syria and Iran. With these states contained, a coalition of Arab states could provide diplomatic cover for a reformed Palestinian Authority to accept the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. Together with a stable and free Iraq, a democratic Palestine at peace with Israel could constitute the foundation of a new Middle East. It would also do a great deal to heal the damage done in the past year to the transatlantic partnership and the image of the United States in the world.

Simply to articulate this vision is to recognize the difficulty of achieving it. Yasser Arafat will not quietly step aside, even though the United States, the European Union, and moderate Arab states worked together with Abu Mazen to achieve a peaceful “regime change” atop the Palestinian Authority in April 2003. Should the new Palestinian government take meaningful action against terrorist groups, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has assured Washington that he will take steps meant to strengthen Mazen's political credibility: releasing prisoners, easing living conditions in the territories, and transferring more embargoed tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority. Nevertheless, in spite of his public comments about evacuating settlements, Sharon's critics do not put much stock in his recent claim that “the rational necessity to reach a settlement has overcome my feelings” for land hallowed in Jewish history and tradition.<sup>3</sup> And how might Syria, Iran, and the terrorist groups they sponsor respond to the construction of this new Middle East?

Europe and the Arab world now look to the United States somehow to bring this conflict to an end. Beyond the tragic consequences that failure to achieve peace would have for the Israelis and Palestinians themselves, the disappointment of the hopes and expectations attached to the Quartet's handiwork, especially in the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, would do great damage to the image of the United States and Israel in the world, regardless of the actual cause of such a failure. Therein lies one of the most vexing strategic problems of the United States in the Middle East: perception and reality rarely correlate. After all, why did it take so long for the Israelis to convince the Bush administration, and then, much later, the Europeans and the Arab world that Arafat was too implicated in terrorism to be a credible negotiating partner?

With the creation in spring 2002 of the Quartet, a diplomatic working group made up of the United States, the EU, Russia, and the UN, Secretary of State Colin Powell gave Brussels a seat at the table in efforts to revive the peace process and move it forward. The Quartet has since developed a road map to a final settlement, which it envisions to take effect in 2005, and supported the process of institutional and political reform within the Palestinian Authority. European heads of state have repeatedly declared their firm commitment to seeing this process through. To live up to this promise, they will need to apply the lessons learned from EU disunity on Iraq by speaking with one voice and working in tandem with, rather than at cross-purposes to, the United States.

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<sup>3</sup>Ari Shavit, “PM: ‘Iraq war created an opportunity with the Palestinians we can't miss,’ ” *Haaretz* April 13, 2003.

The United States and the EU are now working toward the common goal of implementing the road map. After the ugly diplomatic brawl over the war in Iraq, however, there are at least four significant obstacles to transatlantic unity within the Quartet. First, the debate over America's role as the lone superpower in the post-September 11 world remains unresolved. In the months preceding the war in Iraq, France and Germany sided with the rest of the world against the Bush administration's "shock and awe" foreign policy, and even British Prime Minister Tony Blair stands with the Europeans when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Second, above and beyond neoconservative influence, the power of hawkish American Jewish pressure groups, and strong domestic support for Israel, policymakers in Washington have come more and more to share Israel's strategic view of the region since September 11. Third, Europeans continue to distinguish more sharply than Americans between the "terrorism of global reach" attributed to al Qaeda and Palestinian terrorism, which Europeans view as an illegitimate means to the legitimate end of ending occupation and achieving statehood. Finally, because of these issues and their broader historical context, Washington and Brussels have come to accept very different narratives of the so-called Al-Aqsa Intifada. All of these factors reflect a larger reality that threatens to plague transatlantic relations for some time to come: Americans view Israel as an ally on the front lines of a common war against terror, while Europeans see Israeli occupation of and settlement activity in the Palestinian territories as the primary source of Palestinian terrorism and Arab anger toward the West.

### **REDEFINING THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THE WORLD**

Transatlantic tensions over American foreign policy have overshadowed all official efforts to achieve a common understanding of the geopolitical implications of September 11. Determined to right the perceived wrongs of the Clinton era, President Bush's foreign policy team has consistently asserted American primacy through the unapologetic exercise of American power. The Bush administration has demanded that its allies accept or support U.S. policy, on the one hand, and disregarded the interests and concerns of the international community, on the other. In the past two years, President Bush has withdrawn from a number of international treaties, devalued NATO, and alienated a range of allies from Europe to Latin America with aggressive diplomacy, protectionist trade policy, and a general refusal to address a range of matters important to other states but deemed low priority by the White House.

Bush did little to set the transatlantic dialogue on a constructive track before September 11—Europeans regularly cite the familiar list of indicators (Kyoto, International Criminal Court, ABM Treaty, etc.) that showed that he and his advisors had no interest in enmeshing the United States in the web of international institutions that Europeans hoped would realize the vision of a "new world order" evoked by the first President Bush. When it comes to issues of importance to Europeans, such as the environment and global governance, U.S. unilateralism has repeatedly moved Europeans to de-emphasize transatlantic partnership and assume a position of leadership for the "rest of the world." At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in the fall of 2002, for instance, European delegations joined participating countries from around the world in decrying official American indifference to discussions deemed critically important by the international community. With each such American provocation, Europeans have become more accustomed to siding with the "rest of the world." Absent the strategic dependence on the United States generated by the Cold War, secular Europeans committed to some version of social democracy have less and less in common with an increasingly religious United States that

exercises the death penalty and allows for a greater degree of social misery than most western European societies would tolerate.

Although these issues predate September 11, the military superiority put on display in the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan shocked both Americans and Europeans into thinking more concretely about whether or not the United States needs its European allies at all. On September 12, NATO invoked Article 5 of its charter for the first time in history, signaling the willingness of its members to come to the collective defense of the United States. The Bush administration declined the option of granting NATO a significant role in the planning and execution of the military campaign in Afghanistan. Several European nations deployed troops to the region. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder even put his government on the line to maintain his policy of “unlimited solidarity” with the United States, tying a parliamentary vote on German troop deployments in Afghanistan to a vote of confidence in his leadership. Nevertheless, the overwhelming demonstration of American military might that achieved the liberation of Afghanistan from the Taliban shifted international attention from American vulnerability and international terrorism to the consequences of American dominance.

In declaring his “unlimited solidarity,” Schröder also warned the United States that he would not sanction any military “adventures” that have no clear link to September 11, expressing a general European sense that the pursuit of the perpetrators constituted the sole legitimate military response to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. It was in this environment that President Bush delivered his axis of evil address in January 2002, intensifying the debate over the scope of the war against terrorism and the proper role of the U.S. in the post-September 11 world. The speech laid out a strategic leap in the war against terrorism that did not go over well in European capitals. Bush declared the frustration of Iraqi, Iranian, and North Korean efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction to be a third U.S. war aim, alongside the elimination of state-sponsored terrorism and the destruction of non-state terrorist organizations of global reach. The French foreign minister at the time, Hubert Védrine, responded to Bush’s speech by labeling the United States a “hyper-power” and deriding Bush’s vision of the world as simplistic. His German colleague, Joschka Fischer, warned the United States against treating its European allies as satellites. Official German and French skepticism toward the exercise of U.S. power and the articulation of a new foreign policy doctrine thus began long before the allies renewed their decade-old discussions over how best to achieve Iraqi compliance with UN demands that Saddam Hussein disarm. In each case, the lack of consultation with allies stoked European resentment as much as the substance of U.S. policy choices.

The debate over Iraq intensified the linkage of unilateralism and the U.S.-led war against terrorism. In late August 2002, in a speech delivered in Nashville, Tennessee, before the annual meeting of Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vice President Dick Cheney added his voice to a chorus of advocates of unilateral regime change in Iraq. Cheney’s matter-of-fact rejection of the UN inspections as a viable means of achieving the Iraqi dictator’s disarmament infuriated European officials. Schröder, struggling to revive his flagging poll numbers in a tight re-election campaign, seized on the opportunity to mobilize voters with an anti-war message. His declared intent to withhold support of any war against Iraq—even a war sanctioned by the UN—salvaged his otherwise moribund campaign, but also set in motion the diplomatic dynamics that mushroomed into the biggest crisis in German-American relations since creation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. The diplomatic skill with which Secretary of State Powell turned President Bush’s decision to take the Iraq issue to the UN into a unanimous vote for Security Council Resolution 1441 did little to change this dynamic.

According to his critics, Bush had come under the sway of an ideological faction that advocated not only the unapologetic exercise of American power, but also the abandonment of the postwar tradition of transatlantic partnership and the promotion of international law and institutions that act to constrain that power. Proponents of this “neoconservative” movement in Bush’s inner circle, including Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and former Chairman of the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Board Richard Perle, had already begun agitating for regime change in Iraq during the Clinton era, and they take a hard line in support of Israel. Together with a number of leading academic and political figures, the neocons draw intellectual inspiration from the writings of Leo Strauss, a German-Jewish émigré who taught political philosophy at the University of Chicago until his death in 1973. Students and admirers of Strauss have led the conservative reaction to multiculturalism at the university as well as the turn to a more aggressive foreign policy in the name of spreading democracy and defending Western Civilization in a Hobbesian world that would otherwise fall under the domination of tyrants, as happened in the Europe of Strauss’ youth.<sup>4</sup>

Conspiracy theories about a neoconservative conquest of the White House obfuscate far more than they elucidate about the ongoing transformation of the international system. At the same time, neoconservatives have successfully framed the debate over American foreign policy after September 11. Indeed, no essay in the past two years has had a more profound impact on the manner in which Europeans and Americans understand and communicate with one another than neoconservative commentator Robert Kagan’s “Power and Weakness,” which appeared as a journal article in the summer of 2002 before Kagan published a book-length version of his argument in 2003.<sup>5</sup> In a forcefully argued polemic, Kagan urged foreign policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic to rethink the oft-avowed assumption that America and Europe share a common worldview. Whereas the United States appreciates the importance of military strength and the readiness to use it, he posited, Europeans have chosen to project the successes of post-war integration and reconciliation onto the world stage, championing negotiation and adherence to shared norms as the only acceptable means of resolving conflict. With international security under the jurisdiction of the American superpower, Europe has had the luxury of enjoying peace and repudiating everything associated with great power politics, such as significant defense spending, the projection of military power, and the decision to engage in the use of force. The article affirmed critics of the Bush administration in their suspicions of the neoconservative agenda. Because even the most convinced Atlanticists could not deny the kernel of truth in Kagan’s argument, the article also sharpened the dispute over how to adapt the transatlantic relationship to the realities of the post-September 11 world.

For their part, German commentators concluded early on that Bush had opted for an imperialistic unilateralism. “The transformation of the international system according to imperial standards is in full swing,” wrote one observer in *Die Welt*, an America-friendly German daily. “American combat units, secret services, terrorism specialists, customs and administrative personnel are operating openly and covertly throughout the Islamic-Arabic region and its surroundings.”<sup>6</sup> Taking Kagan’s words and Bush’s policies to heart, former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt essentially declared the end of the transatlantic partnership. “European governments would be wise to view the current American determination to go it alone as a fact

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<sup>4</sup>James Atlas, “A Classicist’s Legacy: New Empire Builders,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2003.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review*, No. 113, June/July 2002; *idem.*, *Of Paradise and Power: America vs. Europe in the New World Order* (Knopf, 2003).

<sup>6</sup>Herbert Kremp, “Sind die Amerikaner die Römer unserer Zeit?,” *Die Welt*, May 18, 2002.

and to accommodate themselves to the idea that unilateralism will continue to enjoy the upper hand in Washington for the long term, perhaps for decades,” Schmidt wrote in the summer of 2002. “Already today one hears Americans comparing their land to the Roman Empire. In doing so, they delegate to all of Europe the provincial role of Athens, where the Roman patricians sent their sons to study rhetoric and philosophy.” He went on to urge his fellow Europeans not to become the instruments of an “American world police force.”<sup>7</sup> In the transatlantic debate over Iraq, this question divided Europe into what U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld infamously dubbed “old” and “new” Europe.

German Chancellor Schröder has heeded Schmidt’s counsel and joined forces with Jacques Chirac to promote an independent European security identity as a counterweight to American power. In his response to the outbreak of hostilities in Iraq, Schröder argued that the failure of diplomacy “made more than clear how important it is to be able to speak with one voice in Europe, particularly in crisis situations.”<sup>8</sup> Experts agree that military capabilities are central to the achievement of a strong and independent European voice on the international stage. As the four European leaders committed to this project gathered in Brussels, however, Schröder continued to struggle on the home front to win support within his party for proposed reforms to the German labor market and welfare state. Meanwhile, Finance Minister Hans Eichel has acknowledged that the Red-Green government will not be able to meet the deficit targets of the EU’s Stability Pact in 2003. In these circumstances, the Red-Green coalition would have to bring about a Reagan revolution in Germany to achieve the foreign policy goals of the current Franco-German alliance, not only taking on the unions, but ratcheting up defense spending as well. The preferred alternative should be rapprochement with Washington and the redefinition of the transatlantic security agenda within the context of the war against terrorism.

On May 4, 2003, EU foreign ministers agreed not to allow their disagreements over Iraq to continue to block progress on the formulation of a common European security strategy, assigning EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana the task of drafting a statement on the principles and objectives of European foreign policy. This exercise will afford member states the luxury of working together on general questions of international security without the external pressures of a looming military conflict. As a realist and a former secretary general of NATO, Solana will surely push for a statement that will promote a reinvigorated transatlantic partnership, an objective shared by the majority of member states in the EU. If the member states overcome the friction that plagued them during the Iraq crisis, support Solana’s efforts, and achieve a consensus on a common strategy toward threats to international stability, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the EU might then be ready to engage in a dialogue with the United States about a bilateral security partnership tailored to the international system of the twenty-first century.

Unfortunately, the policies and brusqueness of the Bush administration have done such damage to the image of America throughout Europe and the world that Schröder and Chirac, who share responsibility for exploiting the situation, would have to overcome tremendous popular skepticism to revive the Atlantic Alliance. Indeed, to many commentators and not a few policymakers, the Atlantic Alliance is dead.<sup>9</sup> The failure of the UN Security Council in the Iraq crisis reflected nothing more than a resurgence of great power politics, in which not just the United States, but each of the member states sought to further narrowly defined national

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<sup>7</sup> Helmut Schmidt, “Europa braucht keinen Vormund,” *Die Zeit*, No. 32, August 1, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> “EU-Gipfel im Schatten des Krieges,” REGIERUNGonline, March 21, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Kupchan, “The Atlantic Alliance Lies in the Rubble,” *Financial Times*, April 10, 2003.

interests. Now that the UN Security Council has approved American and British plans for postwar Iraq, the path is open for NATO and the UN to play a constructive role in Iraq.

NATO missions in Afghanistan and the Middle East would reflect Bush's vision of the alliance's new mission in the war against terror, but to Bush's critics, such a reorientation of the transatlantic security architecture would turn NATO into little more than a foreign legion of the United States. Again, these misgivings have as much to do with mistrust of the president's motives as with an assessment of the military dimension to the war against terror.

As long as the Bush administration is in the White House, it will remain difficult to separate anti-Bushism from anti-Americanism in any meaningful way. In the meantime, it is important to distinguish between the current government's policies and the ongoing debate in Washington over what kind of superpower America should be. September 11 and the war against terrorism have helped to resuscitate a bipartisan foreign policy consensus on the salutary use of American power. Democratic foreign policy experts champion the multilateral instinct and criticize the arrogance and unilateralism of Bush and his advisors, but they are nonetheless urging their party leaders to articulate a progressive international agenda based on the conviction that "American power represents an opportunity to do much good for America and the world."<sup>10</sup> How to exercise this power in the most effective and responsible manner remains the subject of fevered debate in Washington, particularly among Democrats and internationalist Republicans, who are torn between the new consensus and opposition to the heavy-handed diplomacy of the Bush White House.

Attempting to put "American Primacy in Perspective," Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth determined that in the summer of 2002 that the "sources of American strength are so varied and so durable that the country now enjoys more freedom in its foreign policy choices than has any other power in modern history." They urged policymakers not to get carried away with this geopolitical preeminence, calling instead for a benevolent unipolarity, in which the United States should "look beyond its immediate needs to its own, and the world's, long-term interests."<sup>11</sup> As did many of the reflections on American hegemony written in the wake of the war in Afghanistan, this plea for national humility failed to mention the other side of the post-September 11 national identity crisis: American primacy on the international stage has not precluded acute vulnerability. From revelations of failures within the U.S. intelligence community to the series of corporate scandals that has crushed investor confidence in Wall Street, Americans have been served two doses of extreme insecurity to go with their pride in American primacy. Secretary for Homeland Security Tom Ridge and his color-coded terrorist threat index have kept the threat of further terrorist attacks on the forefront of the public's consciousness, and Attorney General John Ashcroft has capitalized on this insecurity to become arguably the most powerful attorney general in American history. The occupation of Iraq, rising unemployment, and sluggish growth have all added to this combination of patriotism and unease in the American public.

Taking account of both the preponderance of American might and the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism, the drug trade, disease, environmental degradation, and other transnational security threats, former Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye has argued that the United States cannot afford to stay on the unilateral trail blazed by the Bush administration.

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<sup>10</sup>Dana H. Allin, Philip H. Gordon, and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "The Democratic Party and Foreign Policy" *World Policy Journal* (Volume XX, No 1, Spring 2003).

<sup>11</sup>Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 002.

Instead, Nye promotes the use of what he calls soft power, which in contrast to the hard power of military and economic strength, “co-opts people rather than coerces them.”<sup>12</sup> In light of globalization and the information revolution, he argues, the United States must lead by example, inspiring other nations and peoples to adhere to its leadership on issues of global concern. Nye’s contribution to the debate is an admonition not to abandon international treaties and norms, but rather to exercise global leadership within and through these structures. In other words, America has a choice: either build alliances based upon mutual respect, common priorities, and shared values, viewing American interests in relation to the concerns of allies and the international community, or project power and influence other nations primarily through military means.

To choose soft power and multilateralism as the preferred model for conducting diplomacy is by definition to signal willingness to compromise on the substance of foreign policy issues. Should the Bush administration suddenly choose to lead international efforts to reduce pollution and address global warming, for example, Europeans would no doubt approach other potential points of conflict in a more constructive manner. To do so, however, would not only change the style of American diplomacy by demonstrating that the United States respects the wishes of the rest of the world. It would also change the substance of American policy. The U.S. government would have to place its desire to be liked on the international stage above the short-term interests of corporate America and an SUV-crazed electorate. Only determined political leadership could bring out the transformation of American political culture necessary to see through such a development. In addition to weaning the country of its dependence on foreign oil and making a critical contribution to the long-term health of the planet, a president with the courage and vision to lead the public back into the global dialogue on the environment would bolster American claims to global leadership.

Disputes over the degree to which the United States needs its allies, how Europe should respond to American unilateralism, and how most effectively to wield power on the world stage are pivotal to the future of transatlantic relations, but they do not address the key challenge of the war against terrorism: how to bring about change in the part of the world that produced al Qaeda and the cult of Islamic martyrdom. A preference for multilateralism and soft power raises difficult strategic questions with regard to U.S. policy in the Middle East. One of America’s foremost Middle East experts, Shibley Telhami, urges policymakers to exercise American hegemony with self-restraint and compassion in the post-September 11 world.<sup>13</sup> Agreeing with Nye, Telhami maintains that the United States should treat terrorism as the criminal practice of non-state groups so that the anti-terror coalition may coalesce into a new branch of international law. Both Nye and Telhami contend that counterterrorism is an international public good like free trade, which America can achieve through the exercise of soft power and global leadership. The British Empire cleansed the oceans of piracy in the nineteenth century, Nye reminds us, and the international community benefited. Only by winning the adherence of as many states as possible to international norms can the United States succeed in providing a similar service for the contemporary world order. Nye writes, “If our current campaign against terrorism is seen as unilateral or biased, it is likely to fail, but if we continue to maintain broad coalitions to suppress terrorism, we have a good prospect of success.”<sup>14</sup> Telhami agrees with this proposition. Symptomatically, Nye does not mention Israel a single time in his book, and neither author deals with the issue of state-sponsored terrorism.

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Shibley Telhami, *The Stakes: America and the Middle East* (Westview Press, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Nye, p. 145.

Policymakers in Washington lend less and less credence to the claims of Arab rulers and European diplomats that the rage of the Arab street could threaten the stability of Arab regimes in the event of a prolonged U.S. occupation of Iraq or a failure to achieve a resolution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. Telhami counters this perception with the contention that Arab regimes must respond to their public opinion if they are to fight terrorism effectively and maintain their legitimacy. According to this logic, absent American action to create a Palestinian state and withdraw from Iraq, Arab states would have to resort to the type of repression that undermines the liberalization of the region, which Washington now purports to advocate.

Telhami's case is compelling. After all, it is difficult to imagine that American interests would be served by the democratization of a region in which four fifths of the people view the United States with deep suspicion and resentment. Yet the implication of this argument goes far beyond questions of diplomatic style. Arab and Muslim peoples resent the policies, not the values, of the United States, Telhami emphasizes. To win the war against terrorism, he posits, the United States must win respect of the Arab world instead of provoking fear. To do so, the United States must secure Palestinian statehood.

As in the case of global warming, the style of soft power and multilateralism would dictate a policy choice in the Middle East, and generally speaking, the Arab world is less concerned with the depletion of the ozone than are Europeans. Victory in this war depends to a large degree on the cooperation of European allies and the states of the Arab and Muslim world. Europeans and Arabs are united in their conviction that American pressure on Israel to grant statehood to the Palestinians is the only means of winning the war on terrorism. It should follow that the Bush administration must placate them by pressuring Israel to move swiftly toward the goal of Palestinian statehood.

President Bush has committed himself personally and in the name of the United States to reviving the Middle East peace process on the basis of the Quartet's road map. In doing so, he has implicitly acknowledged a geopolitical reality that he had long seemed content to ignore: The governments and publics of Europe and the Arab world deem a resolution of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict an indispensable component in any strategy to restore stability to the region, to achieve victory in the war against terrorism, and to salvage American credibility and influence around the world. In the words of British historian Timothy Garton Ash, "The Palestinian question is now, for the Arab and Muslim world—and for many Europeans—the litmus test of whether the U.S. President George W. Bush's administration means what it says about liberating and democratizing the Middle East rather than occupying and colonizing it."<sup>15</sup> Having embraced the multilateral approach of the Quartet, Bush has—at least rhetorically— forfeited the unilateralist exit strategy he has reserved for himself in virtually every other policy realm. Neither Bush nor Sharon knows how to go about simultaneously maintaining their strategic alliance and following the road map, to which Europeans and Palestinians have attached so much importance, without falling into the same traps that doomed earlier peace initiatives to failure. More significantly, both of them are convinced that victory in the war against terrorism is the only means by which to achieve a durable peace.

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<sup>15</sup>Timothy Garton Ash, "How the West Can Be One," *New York Times Magazine*, April 27, 2003.

## AMERICAN AND ISRAELI STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE

### Israel and the War against Terrorism

The relationship between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the U.S.-led war against terrorism has been an awkward subplot in the larger war against terrorism ever since the attacks on New York and Washington. Israelis and Palestinians entered the second year of the so-called Second Intifada soon after the attacks on the United States. While al Qaeda does call for the destruction of Israel, Osama bin Laden and his followers declared war on the United States in the name of a far more ambitious cause. In a widely-disseminated statement following the first air raids on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, bin Laden referred to eighty years of Islamic humiliation at the hands of the West, alluding to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the colonization of Muslim lands after the First World War. The presence of U.S. troops on the Arabian Peninsula, Islam's holiest ground, and the sanction regime against Iraq took priority on the list of al Qaeda grievances against the United States. According to the 2001 U.S. State Department report on global terrorism, the al Qaeda network extended into Albania, the Philippines, Chechnya, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, Sudan, and Yemen, and had ties with Sunni Islamic extremist groups in Egypt, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan, but did not have extensive links to militant Islamic movements in Gaza or the West Bank. Before September 11, the Palestinian cause had simply not been a high priority for bin Laden, whose formative years as a jihad warrior were spent fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, President Bush's proclamation of war against terrorism immediately begged the question of how ideologically inspired violence against Israeli and Jewish civilians would figure into this war. Bush's support of Israel and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has rankled Europeans skeptical of the sweeping American response to September 11 and committed to evenhandedness in the Middle East. On September 20, 2001, President Bush told Congress, the American public, and the world that states known to harbor or support terrorists in any way would be treated as terrorists themselves. "You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists," he declared.<sup>16</sup> The following day, Dennis Ross, former President Clinton's special envoy to the Middle East, interpreted this statement in terms of the far-reaching changes that would be necessary to create an environment in the Middle East in which rulers and the media no longer sanctioned the view that terrorism is a legitimate means to advance a political cause.<sup>17</sup> Within a week, the Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, mocked the president's statement, insisting that Iran neither supported terrorism nor the anti-terror effort led by America, which purportedly had "its hands deep in blood for all the crimes committed by the Zionist regime."<sup>18</sup> On October 10, 2001, the 56-member Organization of the Islamic Conference issued a statement opposing attacks on any Muslim states, including the Taliban's Afghanistan, and demanded that the United States force Israel to make peace at any price.<sup>19</sup> In the intervening eighteen months, most of the world has fallen somewhere in between these poles, acknowledging the need for the international community to fight terrorism, yet unwilling to lump Palestinian terrorists together with al Qaeda operatives and uncomfortable with the place of Ariel Sharon's Israel in Washington's new Middle East agenda.

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<sup>16</sup>Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, September 20, 2001.

<sup>17</sup>Interview on CNN, September 21, 2002.

<sup>18</sup>Anton La Guardia, "Straw's mission to find friends ends in failure," *news.telegraph.co.uk.*, September 28, 2001.

<sup>19</sup>"Final Communique of the Ninth Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers," October 10, 2001 (<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/fm/All%20Download/frmex9.htm>).

Policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic expressed the conviction that a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would ease the path towards global peace, and in October 2001, President Bush became the first U.S. president to pronounce his support for the creation of a Palestinian state. Concerned that Israel might bear the brunt of America's burden in cobbling together a global anti-terror coalition, Prime Minister Sharon warned Washington that in 2001 Israel would not accept the fate of Czechoslovakia in 1938. The angry rebuke his remarks provoked in Washington provided for one of the last unpleasant moments marring an otherwise ever closer strategic partnership.

With the invasion of Iraq, the United States shifted the front lines of the war against terrorism to the Middle East. In his speech declaring an end to the military phase of the conflict in Iraq, delivered on May 2, 2003 aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, President Bush reaffirmed his broad view of the war against terrorism. "The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war against terror that began on September 11, 2001, and still goes on," he declared. He then recounted the various successes of the anti-terror coalition, including the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the pursuit of al Qaeda operatives across the globe, and a continued determination to "confront" any regime with ties to terrorism and programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. Again placing the war against terrorism in line with previous American victories over fascism and communism, Bush left no doubt about the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in this historic mission: "Our commitment to liberty is America's tradition, declared at our founding, affirmed in Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, asserted in the Truman Doctrine and in Ronald Reagan's challenge to an evil empire. We are committed to freedom in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in a peaceful Palestine."<sup>20</sup> Military conquest preceded the victory of freedom, however tenuous at this point, in both Afghanistan and Iraq. While the White House surely hopes that the new Palestinian government will successfully pacify terrorist organizations operating in the territories, Israel can be certain of Bush's appreciation of the Jewish state's security dilemma. As if to illustrate the connection between Israel's predicament and the larger war against terrorism, two middle-class British citizens of Pakistani origin went from Gaza to Tel Aviv on the same day that Quartet officials delivered the Road Map to the conflict parties to blow themselves up at a night club not far from the American embassy.

There are, of course, no more popular foils for conspiracy theorists than Israel and the Jews. Anti-Semitic myths claiming that Israel and the Jews were responsible for September 11 are disseminated over the Internet and at the fringes of the mainstream. Virtually everyone has heard by now that Jews who worked in the World Trade Center received a warning not to go to work on September 11, a lie that gained little traction in the United States, but some in Europe and much more in the Arab world. Nor is the American political establishment devoid of those willing to break taboos. Right-wing populist Patrick Buchanan, whose critique of the "Amen corner" ruffled feathers during a previous crisis in the Gulf, has turned to his familiar scapegoats to explain his opposition to the ouster of Saddam Hussein, claiming on national television that only Osama bin Laden, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and Richard Perle supported the war in Iraq. In March, Congressman Tom Moran (D-VA) provoked calls for his resignation and then forfeited his leadership post in the Congressional Democratic caucus after he publicly expressed his conviction that the American Jewish community was behind the rush to war. American Jewish leaders, he plainly stated, could use their influence to change the course of American foreign policy, and he encouraged them to do so. Even before this latest scandal, mainstream pundits felt compelled to debunk the myth that the United States might go to war in Iraq solely

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<sup>20</sup> Remarks by the President from the USS Abraham Lincoln, May 1, 2003.

out of concern for, or at the behest of, Israel and American Jewry.<sup>21</sup> U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell put an end to this latest round in the propagation and exposure of conspiracy theories—at least in the American mainstream—in testimony on March 13 before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. American policy in the Middle East, he said, is “not driven by any small cabal that is buried away somewhere that is telling President Bush or me or Vice President Cheney or Condi Rice or other members of our administration what our policies should be.”<sup>22</sup> This assertion has done little to stem the tide of conspiracy theorists on the American left, in Europe, and throughout the Arab world.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, critics who do not subscribe to conspiracy theories are nonetheless concerned that Israel plays a role of undue significance in the formulation of American foreign policy. Normally, congruence of views between allies is no cause for concern. However, because transatlantic ties are so frayed, because the United States has entered a period of high visibility and military engagement in the Arab and Muslim world, and because Israel is the ally in question, there is reason for sober reflection upon the causes and consequences of the American-Israeli alliance.

Commentators, in citing neoconservatives, fundamentalist Christians, and American Jewry as the determining factors of Bush’s Middle East policy, often overlook the political, diplomatic, military, and ideological dimensions to the war against terrorism and their impact on the U.S.-Israel relationship. As did the Communist threat during the Cold War, terrorism has shifted the American and the Israeli center to the right. Feelings of vulnerability and insecurity in both societies have led to an unfortunate blurring of the boundaries between the extreme right and mainstream voters preoccupied with national security in a time of crisis. The political dominance of Ariel Sharon is purely a function of the security situation, for polls regularly show that a majority of the public would be willing, in exchange for peace, to abandon the settlements and territories to which Sharon’s extreme right coalition partners are ideologically committed. Meanwhile, the U.S. Justice Department continues to refuse to make public the number of people detained without counsel or charges filed in its counterterrorism efforts, and the White House has proposed that Congress grant the CIA and the Pentagon unprecedented powers in the realm of domestic intelligence.

The state of war has caused havoc among Democrats in the U.S. and the Israeli parties of the left. The dovish profile of Labor’s chairman, Amram Mitzna, led the party of Peres and Rabin to electoral defeat in January elections, and he has since resigned. Similarly, no Democrat will win an American presidential election in the foreseeable future without a demonstrated willingness to wield American power to contain the terrorist threat.

Diplomatically, Israel is not in the coalition of the willing, and Israeli officials rightly emphasized that the war in Iraq was not Israel’s war. Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom has nonetheless made clear that he would not have stood in the way of the U.S. and its allies at the UN if Israel had a seat on the Security Council. After all, the elimination of Saddam’s regime has removed the threat of an attack from the east and enabled the Israeli military to reassess its security posture.

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<sup>21</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, “Toxic Talk of War,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2003; Bill Keller, “Is it good for the Jews?,” *New York Times*, March 8, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> “Powell testimony on Iraq, Europe before House Subcommittee,” March 13, 2003 (<http://usembassy.state.gov/mumbai/wwwwashnews205.html>).

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, the effort to debunk this myth in “The Shadow Men,” *The Economist*, April 24, 2003.

Operationally, American and Israeli armed forces and intelligence services are cooperating more intensely than ever. Israel is one of the Pentagon's most critical allies in the war against terrorism, in spite of the obvious need to downplay this cooperation in public. For more than a decade, the Pentagon and Israeli counterparts have collaborated on projects designed to combat terrorism through the application of new technologies. "September 11 changed everything," declared a Pentagon official involved in this collaboration. "I and many Americans now understand what Israelis have endured for a long time. We admire the perseverance, courage, and indomitable spirit that define the Israeli people."<sup>24</sup> By contrast, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed to have sent thousands of suicide bombers from Lebanon and Syria to fight American forces in Iraq.

Americans and Israelis are also facing similar challenges in their respective propaganda wars. During the so-called al-Aqsa Intifada, comparisons of Israeli military action in the West Bank with the methods of the Nazis have been common in the European and Arab press. In the first week of the current war in Iraq, an opposition newspaper in Egypt titled its war coverage, "The Holocaust in Iraq." The text of the article read: "Oh History, recount that the massacre of the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi troops during the Second World War paled in comparison to the Holocaust in Iraq."<sup>25</sup> Arab media outlets speak of American occupation forces and Iraqi martyrs, borrowing the Arab vocabulary of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A similar dynamic is at play in Germany, where a recent cover of the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* deplored what it called the "terror bombs" of the American military.

### **Toward a New Middle East**

Finally, Israel and the United States are the only two non-Arab states occupying Arab lands, a commonality that has grown out of the most important convergence in the two states' strategic thinking. Since September 11, Americans—Democrats and Republicans alike—have recognized that oil and Israel can no longer be the sole priorities of the United States in the Middle East. Fundamentalist Islam, whether in the Sunni variety championed by al Qaeda or in its Shi'ite Iranian form, and the Baathist pan-Arabism of Syria and Saddam's Iraq are ideologies inherently hostile to Israel, the United States, and the West as a whole. As Paul Berman lays out meticulously in his book, *Terror and Liberalism*, these ideological movements draw directly from the intellectual wellspring of the fascist and communist movements of post-World War I Europe.<sup>26</sup> President Bush acknowledged as much in describing the enemies of the United States and of liberal democracy as such in his speech to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001: "They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions; by abandoning every value except the will to power; they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism."<sup>27</sup> Proponents of these ideologies must be prevented from obtaining weapons of mass destruction. The West must also encourage positive change within the Arab world as an alternative to these deadly ideas. The transatlantic community should be united in the pursuit of these goals, as it was just eighteen months ago.

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<sup>24</sup>John K. Reingruber, Deputy Director, Technology Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Remarks delivered at AIPAC annual meeting, March 31, 2003.

<sup>25</sup>Middle East Media Research Institute, "Reaktionen in arabischen Medien auf die Entwicklungen im Irak," Special Dispatch, March 27, 2003.

<sup>26</sup>Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (W.W. Norton, 2003).

<sup>27</sup>Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, September 20, 2001.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, German leaders demonstrated a firm grasp of the threat facing the West. Having declared Germany's "unconditional solidarity" with the United States, Schröder explained the war against terrorism as a conflict between a globalizing world and the reactionary forces of religious fundamentalism: "America is just the most extreme ... symbol for modernity and for that which we call civilization. It is equally a symbol of the opposite of the medieval structures championed by the Taliban and their spiritual kin. And they are cruel structures, beyond this world."<sup>28</sup> Schröder's government deployed German troops to Afghanistan and passed two separate anti-terror laws to facilitate the apprehension of international terrorist groups within Germany. Germany has thousands of soldiers serving around the world in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Interior Minister Otto Schily continues to enjoy excellent relations with U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft in their cooperative counterterrorism efforts. To pursue the non-military aspects of the war against terrorism, Foreign Minister Fischer has created a taskforce for Islam dialogue. As things stand, this taskforce has few illusions about its potential to promote change in societies that are not open to cross-cultural dialogue in the first place. At the same time, European critics have been quick to dismiss the argument that the end of Saddam Hussein's regime might be the beginning of a broader transition in the Arab world, away from autocracy and toward freedom.

In the United States, meanwhile, neoconservatives are not the only advocates of a concerted U.S. effort to help moderate Arabs take ownership of their political culture and institutions. Democratic leaders, including Senators Joseph Biden, John Kerry, and Joseph Lieberman, have criticized President Bush for neglecting the battle of ideas in the war against terrorism, insisting that in addition to coercing rogue states to renounce terrorism, America must allocate more political and economic resources to assist the modernization and liberalization of the Arab and Muslim world. Former Clinton administration officials Ronald Asmus and Ken Pollack are seeking to convince America's European allies that they, too, have a stake in this endeavor, arguing that the transformation of the Middle East constitutes the "new transatlantic project."<sup>29</sup>

Democrats have supported the government's efforts to pressure Syrian President Bashar al Assad to turn over Iraqi Baathists and whatever weapons of mass destruction Saddam may have smuggled into Syria to the American forces in the region. "Perhaps Bashar Assad will heed American warnings," commented Marc Ginsberg, who chairs the Alliance for American Leadership, a Democratic foreign policy organization. "If not, we may soon have a chance to see a shooting star falling over the skies of Damascus."<sup>30</sup>

Assad must make a critical choice about the Syrian role in the new Middle East, for the United States is determined not to let him play spoiler in post-Saddam Iraq or in the Palestinian territories. The United States has cut the flow of Iraqi oil to Syria, depriving Damascus of \$1.1 billion annually in illicit oil sales. Washington has also demanded that Syria shut down the terrorist groups operating out of Damascus and Lebanon. Surrounded by America-friendly regimes in Jordan, Israel, Iraq, and Turkey, Assad is politically, diplomatically, economically, and strategically isolated. Like Saddam before him, he will surely look to Europe and the international community for relief. French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin's recent statement that the Syria must end its occupation of Lebanon was an unmistakable signal that the

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<sup>28</sup>Der Bundeskanzler im ZEIT-Interview zur Bedrohung der westlichen Zivilisation sowie Deutschlands Rolle in der Welt, October 18, 2001 (<http://www.bundeskanzler.de/Interviews-.7716.50452/Der-Bundeskanzler-im-ZEIT-Interview-zur-Bedrohun...htm>).

<sup>29</sup>Ronald D. Asmus and Kenneth M. Pollack, "The New Transatlantic Project," *Policy Review*, October 2002.

<sup>30</sup>Marc Ginsberg, "Bashing Bashar," *The Weekly Standard*, April 28, 2003.

French, too, have recognized that, in the words of Secretary of State Powell, there is a “new strategic situation” in the Middle East. Although there are as of yet few signs that Assad has committed himself one way or the other, Syria has indicated a readiness to resume peace talks with Israel for the first time since the death of Assad’s father in 2000.

This realignment of forces has also created new realities in the Palestinian territories. The Palestinian Authority has thus far funded its terrorist campaign with the help of friends in the region ideologically opposed to any peace with Israel. Saddam Hussein generously rewarded the families of Palestinian suicide bombers. Iran sold the Palestinian Authority weapons and funded Palestinian terrorist organizations. Saudi Arabian donors filled the coffers of Hamas, and Syria likewise supported a number of Palestinian terrorist organizations. American policymakers have thus far factored these regional dynamics into their understanding of the U.S.-led war against terrorism more than Europeans. With Saddam out of power, both Arafat and Assad on notice, and Iran attempting to come to grips with life surrounded by an emerging sphere of American influence, President Bush believes that he can leverage this moment into a comprehensive regional peace.

Less dramatically, but no less consequentially, the past two years have transformed the American relationship with Saudi Arabia. Europeans often expressed their distaste for President Bush’s “Axis of Evil” policy over the past year by pointing to this decades-old marriage of convenience. After all, the House of Saud permitted the Saudi religious establishment to cultivate and export the hybrid mix of Wahhabi Muslim asceticism and violent fundamentalist Islam propagated by bin Laden and his followers, and fifteen of the nineteen September 11 hijackers held Saudi citizenship. Moreover, in the opinion of many Europeans, the American campaign for regime change in Iraq and calls for freedom from theocracy in Iran rang rather hollow in light of America’s strategic dependence on the oil of the autocratic Saudi regime.

The recent terrorist attacks in Riyadh shocked the Saudi royal family out of the denial mode that had characterized its responses to terrorist acts perpetrated by Saudi nationals beyond its borders. Before the attacks in early May, only the Saudis themselves disputed that terrorists continued to receive financial support from within the desert kingdom. A pending class action suit on behalf of the families of 600 victims of September 11 seeks damages from seven banks, eight Muslim organizations, and three Saudi princes, including the former head of Saudi intelligence and the defense minister, the brother of King Fahd. In July 2002, an analyst from the RAND Corporation advised the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Board to treat Saudi Arabia as an enemy in the war against terror. News reports of this internal Pentagon discussion and unsatisfactory Saudi cooperation in U.S. counterterrorism efforts compounded the most severe crisis in U.S.-Saudi relations in decades. In the midst of this controversy, Rachel Bronson, director of Middle East studies at the Council of Foreign Relations, counseled caution, arguing that Washington should prefer continued partnership with a stable Saudi regime to the risks of instability and radicalization that a path of confrontation would generate. “Asking the Saudis to take on terrorist financing would be enormously costly to them,” she warned. “The crown prince would have to directly challenge the religious establishment, as well as key members of his own family.”<sup>31</sup> As the crisis in Iraq displaced the role of Saudi Arabia in the war against terror from the headlines, the royal family did begin speaking of internal reforms. Now, as American and Saudi investigators collaborate more closely on the latest terrorist act on Saudi soil, the price to be paid for denial, inaction, and the religious justification of suicide bombing is ever clearer to both the royal family and its subjects.

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<sup>31</sup> Rachel Bronson, “Don’t back Saudi Arabia into a corner,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 16, 2002.

For its part, the PLO continues to endure its most serious power struggle in twenty years. European and Arab leaders exerted tremendous pressure on Arafat to grant Abu Mazen the authority he sought. Unfortunately, the compromise between the two Palestinian leaders left Arafat with sufficient authority thus far to frustrate the new prime minister's stated aim of disarming the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and containing Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Backed by the United States, Israel has already clashed with the EU representatives in the Quartet over the question of whether they would deliver the road map to Arafat or Mazen, who ultimately accepted the document without Arafat, and Egyptian Mubarak has warned that the isolation of Arafat from the peace process would doom it to failure. Despite these and other formidable obstacles to a renewed peace process, the Bush administration will insist that both Syria and the new Palestinian leadership translate their words into action against terrorist groups as a precondition to any settlement, a position fully consistent with the policies of the Sharon government.

For their part, Arab intellectuals notice the self-serving contradiction when Washington calls for democracy in Tehran, Baghdad, and the Palestinian territories, yet remains silent with respect to the "moderate" Arab states. "How can America support these undemocratic Arab systems, but desire to eliminate others because they are not democratic?," Salim al-Hass asked in a Lebanese daily in the summer of 2002. At the same time, he expressed the hope that despite the uneven application of the policy, American determination to push the Arab world towards democracy will reach every state in the region over the long haul. "It is therefore not going too far to say that the Arab world stands at the threshold of a new era," al-Hass continued. "Introducing democracy and practicing it correctly and effectively will be the greatest challenge [of this new era]." He called on Arab rulers to engage in a dialogue with Arab intellectuals on how best to introduce freedom and democracy in a manner consistent with local conditions, "so that the change arises from an internal will and not forced from the outside."<sup>32</sup> If the Arab rulers do not rise to this challenge, he concluded, their states will remain internationally isolated, like Libya; they will be threatened with occupation, as in the case of the Palestinians and Iraq, or they will be toppled by an internal revolution.

In light of these alternatives, the West must place a greater priority on programs to help states that have shown themselves open to reform, like Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and elsewhere, to build the prerequisites of civil society, such as political parties and a free press. According to the *2002 Arab Human Development Report*, which the UN published in 2002, the social, economic, and demographic crises of the Arab world are threatening or will soon threaten the stability of autocratic regimes in the region. The Arab authors of the UN report cite the lack of freedom, the exclusion of women from political and economic life, and a dearth of scientific and scholarly innovation as the most critical deficits facing the Arab world. It is out of this context that the various fundamentalist Muslim movements engaged in terrorism have developed. The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, which Secretary of State Powell announced in December 2002, aims to achieve these goals. "The spread of democracy and free markets, fueled by the wonders of the technological revolution, has created a dynamo that can generate prosperity and human well-being on an unprecedented scale," Powell said in announcing the initiative. "But this revolution has left much of the Middle East behind."<sup>33</sup> With

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<sup>32</sup> Middle East Media Research Institute, "Die Krise der Demokratie in der arabischen Welt," Special Dispatch, August 24, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Secretary of State Colin Powell, "The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead," Remarks delivered at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC, December 12, 2002.

\$29 million allocated in the first year to programs in the realm of education, civil society, and private sector development and economic reform, the financial commitment to this critical dimension of the war against terror pales in comparison to the billions spent on war with Iraq and increases in defense spending. President Bush has since announced plans to create a free trade area in the Middle East within the next decade. Conceived of as a transatlantic project, fostering the liberalization of Arab world would pay dividends for all parties involved.

### **THE PRO-PALESTINIAN ADVOCACY OF THE EU**

September 11 did little to change the European conviction that the plight of the Palestinians, rather than the deficits of freedom and opportunity cited by al-Hass and the authors of the *Arab Human Development Report*, constitutes the most urgent problem of the Arab world. European states opposed to war in Iraq were united on this point, too, and even those states that supported the United States in Iraq now share the view that Palestinian statehood should be the top priority of the West. More so than the Europeans, the United States and Israel believe that ensuring that the Palestinian Authority has truly entered the post-Arafat era and is committed to fighting terrorism constitutes a pre-condition to progress toward this goal. This dispute has deep historical roots.

In the 1970s, the European left hailed Arafat as a freedom fighter for the cause of a Palestinian David against the military Goliath of Israel, which had conquered the West Bank and Gaza from Jordan and Egypt, respectively. The European Community first made support for the establishment of a Palestinian state and the legitimacy of the PLO as a negotiating partner a central doctrine of European foreign policy in its Venice Declaration of 1980. The EU has fashioned itself an advocate of the Palestinian cause ever since. Economic interests and Europe's geographic proximity to the region drove this policy, which Israelis believed to show that Europeans were willing to compromise Israeli security in order to improve relations with the Arab world. Partly for this reason, the Europeans did not play a critical role in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians before the collapse of the Oslo process in 2000.

At the request of the Israelis and the Americans, the EU served throughout the 1990s as the most important financial donor to the Palestinian Authority. Europe also responded much differently to the failure of negotiations and the onset of violence than the United States. President Bush took office in January 2001 determined to avoid the appearance of continuity with the Clinton administration in any policy area. Moreover, President Clinton's efforts to forge a Middle East peace before the end of his term had ended in abject failure; Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak found himself having to defend Israel against a wave of terrorist attacks in the midst of an election campaign with nothing to offer the electorate in the way of hopes for a negotiated peace, and the American Jewish community was left numb by the refusal of Arafat to rise to the occasion and negotiate a mutually acceptable peace. In this environment, Bush shifted U.S. policy toward conflict management from a distance, seeking ceasefires and reciprocal Israeli concessions without expending political capital on the effort. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took office, and Palestinian terrorism intensified. The Mitchell Report and Tenet Plan of spring and summer 2001 had no impact on this dynamic.

European politicians sought to fill the void left by the American lack of engagement, undertaking a number of diplomatic initiatives to try to manage the conflict, but in the European public sphere, Sharon was perceived to be more dangerous and less interested in peace than Arafat. The media portrayed Sharon's provocative visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000

as the cause of the Intifada, avoiding discussion of the decision that Arafat had made to ride the tiger of violence and terrorism and to cooperate with rather than confront extremist groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel. Sharon's strategy of isolating Arafat won the Palestinian leader sympathy in Europe, while the Belgian courts pressed ahead in their campaign to try the Israeli prime minister as a war criminal.

Soon after September 11, President Bush recognized that if he hoped to convince Arab rulers to join a coalition against terror, there was no alternative to American mediation between the Israelis and Palestinians. In the months that followed, Israeli concessions and Palestinian acts of terrorism immediately preceded each mission of Bush's special envoy, retired General Anthony Zinni. Finally, in December, Arafat issued a call to his people in Arabic on Palestinian television to cease violent attacks on Israeli civilians. The ceasefire lasted for a month, until the Israeli army killed a Palestinian terrorist in a pre-emptive strike, re-igniting the violence on the ground. During the period of apparent quiet, however, the Palestinian Authority awaited the arrival of the *Karine A*, a boatload of arms it had purchased from Iran. When confronted about this arms deal, Arafat lied to President Bush, denying any involvement in the affair. This act of deceit discredited Arafat with the Bush administration. The president's rhetoric gradually hardened over the first half of 2001, culminating in his Rose Garden address on the Middle East in June, in which he called on the Palestinians to choose a new leadership untainted by terrorism.

In Europe, by contrast, the public outcry sparked by the Israeli bombing of an EU-financed air-strip in December 2001 drowned out the coverage of Arafat's decision to purchase a boatload of weapons from Iran. European indignation and transatlantic discord peaked in the spring of 2002 in response to Israeli military action in the West Bank, the first siege of Arafat's compound in Ramallah, and false reports of an alleged massacre in Jenin, a densely populated, UN-administered refugee camp that had nonetheless become a center of operations for Islamic Jihad. Following President Bush's Rose Garden address in June 2002, European foreign ministers reiterated their recognition of Arafat as the legitimate leader of the Palestinians.

The close cooperation between Quartet diplomats on the ground in Israel and the Palestinian territories has yet to translate into a more harmonious relationship between European heads of state and the Israeli government. As the international community crept further toward a diplomatic quagmire over Iraq this winter, the EU and Israel exchanged heated words. On February 17, European leaders came together in Brussels to try to put the Humpty Dumpty of their common foreign and security policy back together again. Unable to reconcile the pro-American stance of the majority with the anti-war stance of a minority led by France and Germany, they resorted to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to find a common voice. In a statement released at the summit, the EU repeated "its firm belief in the need to invigorate the peace process in the Middle East and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."<sup>34</sup> Days later, British Foreign Minister Jack Straw and his Norwegian colleague Jan Petersen published an article in the London-based Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* entitled "Two simultaneous crises in the Middle East."

Israelis took exception to this diplomatic tactic, which in their view sacrificed Israeli interests to the desire of Europeans to show a united front and win the approval of Arab states and their own Muslim minorities. In one of his last acts as Israeli Foreign Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu responded with an angry letter to his European counterparts, rejecting this linkage of the crisis in Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the same vein, Israeli Ambassador to

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<sup>34</sup>Extracts from the Conclusions of the European Council, February 17, 2003 ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/councils/bx20030217/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/councils/bx20030217/index_en.htm)).

Germany Shimon Stein published an editorial in a German daily, asking several pointed questions of the Europeans:

Do EU politicians actually believe that there is a connection between the crisis in Iraq, on the one hand, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the refusal of Arab states to recognize the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state, on the other? Can anyone imagine a connection between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the decisions of Saddam Hussein in the 1980s to wage war on Iran, to use chemical weapons on his own people, and to invade Kuwait? Does anyone seriously think that the resolution of the conflict between [Israelis] and Palestinians would have altered Saddam Hussein's plans to develop capabilities for unconventional weapons and delivery systems in order to establish hegemony in the Gulf region and beyond? Does anyone seriously believe that this linkage might motivate Saddam Hussein to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1441?<sup>35</sup>

The adoption of such self-serving tactics by the EU in the Middle East, Stein continued, intensified the distrust of Israelis toward Europeans, which had reached new heights over the course of the so-called Al-Aqsa Intifada. Indeed, the relationship between Israel and the EU has eroded steadily in light of the readiness of European officials to issue such condemnations and their concomitant reluctance to recognize the right of Israel to self-defense in the face of terror attacks on Israeli pizzerias, discos, cafes, university cafeterias, and holiday celebrations. Maintaining this pattern, in the days preceding the February 17 summit, Brussels had sent an official letter of rebuke to Israel, protesting its recent military actions, the failure to dismantle illegal settlements, and other Israeli actions that do damage to the Palestinian cause and EU investments in that cause. Meanwhile, the European Parliament has petitioned the EU anti-fraud office to conduct an investigation into the question of whether or not the Palestinian Authority used EU funds to finance terrorism.

Israeli disappointment in European policy toward Israel and the Palestinians over the past three years is far more significant than a simple difference of opinion. Israel and the United States insist on denying Arafat a substantive role in the process because he cannot again be trusted to protect Israeli lives. After more than two years of impassioned debate over why negotiations failed and violence erupted, a major Arab official has finally admitted on the record that Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak, and Dennis Ross have been telling the truth all along. Arafat chose war over peace. Saudi Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar confirmed this account in the March 24 edition of the *New Yorker*. In Elsa Walsh's profile, which is astonishing in its belated candor, Bandar confirms that President Clinton had gotten Israeli Prime Minister Barak's consent to offer a package that gave Arafat...

... almost everything he wanted, including the return of about ninety-seven per cent of the land of the occupied territories; all of Jerusalem except the Jewish and Armenian quarters, with Jews preserving the right to worship at the Temple Mount; and a thirty-billion-dollar compensation fund. ... On January 2, 2001, Bandar picked up Arafat at Andrews Air Force Base and reviewed the plan with him. Did he think he could get a better deal? Bandar asked. Did he prefer Sharon to Barak? he continued, referring to the upcoming election in Israel. Of course

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<sup>35</sup> Shimon Stein, "Europa, Israel und der Irak," *Die Welt*, February 28, 2003.

not, Arafat replied. Barak's negotiators were doves, Bandar went on. 'Since 1948, every time we've had something on the table we say no. Then we say yes. When we say yes, it's not on the table anymore. Then we have to deal with something less. Isn't it about time we say yes?' Bandar added, 'We've always said to the Americans, 'Our red line is Jerusalem. You get us a deal that's O.K. on Jerusalem and we're going, too.' Arafat said that he understood, but still Bandar issued something of an ultimatum: 'Let me tell you one more time. You have only two choices. Either you take this deal or we go to war. If you take this deal, we will throw all our weight behind you. If you don't take this deal, do you think anybody will go to war for you?'<sup>36</sup>

As Bandar had warned him, neither Syria nor Egypt nor Saudi Arabia was willing to go to war for Arafat. Nevertheless, the power of armed rejectionists, who share ideological affinities, arms, and financial resources with global terrorist organizations and the states in the region that support them, has now grown to the point where a Palestinian leadership committed to a monopoly of force must risk civil war to achieve peace.

### **CONCLUSION: GERMANY AS PEACEMAKER**

If Tony Blair has been President Bush's best friend in Europe during the Iraq crisis, Joschka Fischer could prove to be Bush's most helpful partner within the Quartet. As the only European statesman to enjoy the confidence of both Israelis and Palestinians, the German foreign minister played a central role in early diplomatic efforts to control the violence in the first year of the Intifada. Fischer's personal and diplomatic response in Tel Aviv on June 1, 2001, when a suicide bomber murdered twenty-one Israeli teenagers and wounded 120 more at the Dolphinarium disco, had an enduring impact on the foreign minister and on his role in Middle East diplomacy. Fischer recognized that Arafat had made a critical strategic mistake in choosing violence over negotiations in the fall of 2000, yet maintained a dialogue with the Palestinian leader to try to convince him to call an end to the Intifada and return the conflict parties to the negotiation table. Chastened by the lessons of German history and his own leftist, anti-Zionist past, Fischer also understands the Israeli security dilemma. Israel is the only state that cannot afford to lose a single battle, he often reminds the German public. On a recent visit to Israel, Fischer lamented that he feels as though he has fallen "between the stools" of Israel and Europe. By helping to bridge the divide between Europe and Israel, Fischer can serve goals of central importance to Berlin, including renewed transatlantic partnership, solidarity with Israel, and perhaps most significantly, the achievement of Palestinian statehood.

The special historical relationship between Germany and Israel continues to determine their diplomatic ties. Since the days of Konrad Adenauer, reparations and diplomatic support for Israel have constituted a central element in the German postwar foreign policy of European integration and transatlantic partnership. Fischer has taken this German commitment to Israel's security even further than his predecessors, proclaiming it the third leg of the Berlin Republic's foreign policy stool. The only pro-Israel minority on the left in all of Europe also testifies to a continued presence of the past in the German-Israeli relationship that distinguishes Germany from its European partners and makes it Israel's second most important friend in the world.

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<sup>36</sup> Elsa Walsh, "The Prince," *The New Yorker*, March 24, 2003.

In spite of strains in the German-American relationship over Iraq, German-Israeli security cooperation remains strong, highlighted most recently by the shipment to Israel of German patriot missiles to defend against a possible Iraqi attack. Germany has also worked against pro-Palestinian efforts within the EU and the UN, including the rejection last year of calls in Brussels for sanctions against the Jewish state. At home and abroad, Fischer has consistently shown understanding for Israel's need to show strength in times of crisis, regularly repeating the fact that Israel cannot afford to lose a single war.

At the same time, a variety of countervailing pressures are putting the durability and depth of German support for Israel to a test. Within the EU and at the UN, two institutions with far less credibility with Israel than the Germans enjoy, Germany must seek consensus according to the multilateralist paradigm so central to European integration and German foreign policy. This pressure from above is supplemented by popular opinion and mass media concerned about settlements, disillusioned by the collapse of the peace process, sympathetic to the Palestinian underdog, and convinced of Ariel Sharon's guilt as a war criminal.

These pressures are not insurmountable. Flanked by ten new EU member states with stronger ties to Israel and the United States than many western European states have at the moment, Germany could reprise its Cold War role as the anchor of a transatlantic alliance in the war against terrorism. Just as the Federal Republic of Germany occupied the front lines of the Cold War, Israel now bears the brunt of terrorism, the death cult of Muslim martyrdom. Chancellor Schröder recognized this threat in the Taliban and those he called their "spiritual kin," and his government has committed itself to the struggle against them. Germany denied that there was a spiritual, ideological, or strategic connection between Saddam's Baathist dictatorship and these enemies of the West, but the ideological affinities of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Mullah Omar, and Osama bin Laden are undeniable.

The mantra of the Bush administration after the war in Iraq, "punish France, ignore Germany, and forgive Russia" makes for a good sound bite, but it is bad policy. Schröder, Fischer, and Defense Minister Peter Struck have repeated time and again over the past eight months that disagreement over Iraq must not derail the German-American partnership, and they are right. The Red-Green government, in large part because of Foreign Minister Fischer's personal investment in the issue, has skillfully balanced historical solidarity with Israel, condemnation of terrorism, and sympathy for Palestinian suffering and national aspirations over the first two years of the "Second Intifada."

As in the Cold War, Germany is thus well positioned to mediate between the United States and France in an effort to forge a common European policy within a strong transatlantic alliance. The personal friction between the American president and the German chancellor must not undermine the potential for a revitalized security partnership. No matter who is in the White House, the United States must exercise its power to confront threats to international order and work with a united Europe to create an environment in the Arab world in which terrorists find no safe harbor and people have hope for a better future. Having secured a role in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the EU is determined to remain involved as this process moves forward. For the reasons already elaborated, however, Israel will not accept a substantive role for the Europeans as mediators. The United States has to take the lead in the process, and the EU must accept that the best way to achieve the common goal of a two-state solution is not pressuring Israel, but working with Israel to identify the best means of strengthening forces within the Palestinian Authority that will fight terror and relieve the security and economic crisis that has been plaguing Israel for almost three years now. To be sure, these moves involve

addressing the humanitarian situation in the territories, reducing the number of checkpoints, and dismantling illegal outposts, but only American mediators enjoy sufficient credibility in Jerusalem to convince the Israelis that they will not be pushed into taking measures that would undermine their security.

The road map has the advantage of pointing the way toward a resolution, but its rigid timetables and significant omissions will make it difficult for the Bush administration and its European partners in the Quartet, much less the conflict parties themselves, to agree on how to deal with issues of compliance and reciprocity. Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen can work with one another to maneuver their peoples out of the morass of the ongoing Intifada, but their aides are already airing disagreements over the content and implementation of the road map in the press. An EU confident in American intentions will more readily allow American mediation to proceed without intervening on behalf of the Palestinian leadership, as often happened during Arafat's undisputed reign, and potentially undermining the delicate first steps toward a risky but inevitable confrontation with Palestinian terrorist organizations. To move this process forward successfully, the United States must therefore act to restore trust to its relationship with the EU by following through on the president's commitment to a revived peace process. For its part, the EU must accept a back seat to Washington when it comes to monitoring security arrangements, certifying Palestinian compliance, and seeking Israeli concessions. The EU must also place all of its weight behind Abu Mazen in his ongoing power struggle with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, whose responsibility for the terrorist war against Israel the EU was too slow to recognize. Without a common transatlantic understanding of the terrorist threat, no one will be able to achieve the goal that unites all moderates, be they American, Israeli, European, or Arab—a democratic Palestine anchoring a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.