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WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

[Home](#) > [Archives](#) > [April_2004](#) > undefined

April 2004, pages 20-25

What They Said

Former Congressmen Assess U.S. Foreign Policy

A Republican's Case Against George W. Bush

By Paul Findley



Author and former Congressman Paul Findley (R-IL) at a Jan. 27 Council for the National Interest Public Hearing on "The Middle East in Election 2004." (Staff photo D. Hanley).

DURING MY LONG life, America has surmounted many severe challenges. As a teenager, I experienced the Great Depression. In World War II, I saw war close-up as a Navy Seabee. As a country newspaper editor, I watched the Korean War from afar. As a Member of Congress, I agonized through the Vietnam War from start to finish. During these challenges I never for a moment worried about America's ultimate survival with its great principles and ideals still intact.

Today, for the first time, I worry deeply about America's future. We are in a deep hole. I believe President George W. Bush's decision to initiate war on Iraq will be the greatest and most costly blunder in American history. He has set America on the wrong course.

I must speak out. As best I can, I must bestir those who will listen to the grave damage already done to our nation, and warn of still greater harm if Bush continues his present course during a second term in

the White House.

When terrorists assaulted America on 9/11, killing nearly 3,000 innocent civilians, President Bush responded, not by focusing on bringing to justice the criminals who were responsible, but by initiating a war against impoverished, defenseless Afghanistan, a broad attack that killed at least 3,000 innocent people. Even before the dust settled in Afghanistan, the president initiated another war, this one on Iraq—a war planned long before 9/11.

In the name of national security, the president has brought about fundamental, revolutionary changes that threaten our nation's moorings.

At home and abroad, he has undercut time-honored principles of the rule of law.

Abroad, he has made war a ready instrument of presidential policy instead of reserving it as a last

resort should peril confront our nation.

In public documents, he claims the personal authority to make war any time and any place he alone chooses, and the authority to use force to keep unfriendly nations from increasing their own military strength.

His power is unprecedented. He directs a military budget greater than all other nations' combined. At his instant, personal command is more military power than any nation in all recorded history ever before possessed.

He proclaims America the global policeman, and for that role he has already expanded a worldwide system of U.S. military bases. Four new ones are in place in Iraq and four others near the Caspian Sea.

He orders the development and production of a new generation of nuclear arms for U.S. use only, meanwhile threatening other nations—Iran and North Korea, for example—against acquiring any of its own.

Unleashing America's mighty sword, he brings about regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq, but mires our forces in quagmires from which escape seems unlikely for many years.

He isolates America from common undertakings with time-tested allies. He trivializes the United Nations and violates its charter.

The president offers wars without end, and the Congress shouts its approval. But his use of America's vast arsenal is so reckless that he is regarded widely as the most dangerous man in the world.

Here at home, in his frantic quest for terrorists, he stoops to bigoted measures based on race and national origin, tramples on civil liberties, and spreads fear and disbelief throughout the land. Those of Middle Eastern ancestry, and many others, buckle under government-inflicted humiliations and abuses with trepidation, sorrow and resentment.

Frustrated by Iraqi dissidents who protest the occupation of their country by killing U.S. troops almost daily, the president reverts to war measures. He orders heavy aerial bombing in wide areas of the countryside.

Even as body bags pile high, the president seems oblivious to war's horror. The rockets and one-ton bombs may kill a few Iraqi guerrillas and cause others to pull back and pause, but they kill and maim innocent civilians, level homes, turn neighborhoods into rubble, and permanently blight many lives. They create deep-seated outrage, not cooperation.

The Iraqi carnage is piled alongside the simultaneous destruction and blighting of American lives. More than 500 U.S. military personnel have been killed and, according to one estimate, nearly 10,000 have been wounded. Ponder that fact. Ten thousand American families permanently blighted in a war the United States initiated. Mark Twain, writing of war, once asked, "Will we wring the hearts of the unoffending widows with unavailing grief?"

The president overreacts to 9/11 by leading America into a lengthy fiery trial that may last far into the future—years of U.S.-initiated wars designed to punish regimes believed to harbor terrorists.

This is not the America my generation fought to preserve in World War II.

Starting wars will not bring a just peace. The president should ponder deeply why many people

in many nations engage in anti-American protests.

The answer: People worldwide, especially in Iraq and Palestine, are livid over grievances against America. Almost all Iraqis are glad Saddam Hussain is out of power, but many of them—the total may be a substantial majority—see America as arrogant, biased, untrustworthy, and bent on world domination.

Here are some of the reasons:

- In the 1980s—the height of Saddam’s cruel treatment of Kurds and other Iraqi citizens—the U.S. government served as the dictator’s silent, uncomplaining partner, helping him battle Iran by providing intelligence and critical military supplies, even some components of weapons of mass destruction.
- At the end of the 1991 Gulf war, Iraqis had a bitter experience with the president’s father. President George Bush, Sr. publicly urged the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam. His call prompted a strong uprising, but Bush refused U.S. support in any form. This bleak rejection prompted Saddam to use helicopter gunships to slaughter dissidents by the hundreds. He had retained use of these lethal aircraft in a provision of the U.S.-approved armistice.
- Iraqis also remember bitterly that U.S. fighter planes enforced sanctions on the people of Iraq for a decade after the Gulf war. This embargo was so harsh it led to immense civilian suffering, including the death of at least a half-million Iraqi infants.
- Today, Iraqis are wary of the president’s motives and dependability. Many doubt that his true objectives are, as he now states, establishing freedom and democracy in their country, or, as he earlier stated, destroying Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. Aware that he ignored offers of conciliation from Saddam’s emissaries before the invasion, they believe he harbors dreams of an American empire and wanted the war in Iraq, come what may.
- Their greatest and most deep-seated complaint is Bush’s failure to make even the slightest move to halt America’s anti-Arab bias. For example, the president has made no effort to distance America from Israel’s colonialism.

He pays lip-service to statehood as a goal for the Palestinians, but he has done nothing to stop Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s brutality of Palestinians—assassinations, military forays that leave vast death and destruction, high fences that confine Palestinians like cattle, and the steady usurpation of more Palestinian land.

Bush seems unconcerned by the worldwide outrage at America’s massive, unconditional, uncritical support of Israel, without which the Jewish state could never have carried out its humiliation and devastation of Palestinian society.

Bush is overwhelmed by the influence of religious zealots—both Zionist and fundamentalist Christian. He ignores America’s own heavy guilt for the plight of Palestinians. He fails to recognize that more than a billion Muslims worldwide, along with many millions of non-Muslims, are deeply aggrieved at this complicity.

Bush offers an exquisite example of close-in hypocrisy. On one side of a Middle East border, he tries to convince Iraqi Arabs that he offers them democracy and freedom, while at the same time, on the other side of the border, he supports Israel’s violent denial of these identical rights for Palestinian Arabs.

Iraqis worry that U.S. occupation will become a new colonialism—indefinite U.S. control of Iraqi oil reserves, Israeli-style brutality, and a U.S.-forced treaty that will keep Iraq from helping

the Palestinians.

President Bush is so befuddled by the awful carnage of 9/11 and rumors of more assaults to come that he does not see what is vivid to most of the world—the real ground zero of terrorism is in Palestine, not Manhattan. He ignores the real ground zero at great peril to America.

This issue surmounts all others in the presidential political campaign. It impels me to speak out against what George W. Bush is doing. I am a Republican, and I will remain in the Party of Lincoln. I feel no joy in making this case against the president. He may be sincere in his stewardship, but he is wrong—dead wrong—in the direction he is taking our country.

What should be done? Must the president proceed with wars without end?

The president's best war decision is a purely political one, and it is plain, peaceful, generous and just. He must make a clean break from Israel's scofflaw behavior.

If Bush has the will, he can easily free himself and America. If he acts, he will transform the grim scene in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East into bright promise. Any day he chooses, the president can instantly—without firing a shot—quiet guerrilla warfare in Iraq and anti-American protests throughout the world.

All he needs to do is inform Sharon that all aid will be suspended until Israel vacates the Arab territory Israeli forces seized in June 1967. U.S. aid is literally Israel's lifeline, so the ultimatum would be electrifying evidence that the United States, at long last, will do what is right for Arabs and Muslims, while still protecting Israel from attack. If Bush acts, the Iraqi people will have reason to believe, for the first time, that the U.S. government truly opposes colonialism.

The ultimatum would prompt rejoicing worldwide, not just among Iraqis and Palestinians. Opinion polls show that a large majority of Israelis, weary of the long, bloody struggle to subjugate the Palestinians, would welcome coexistence with an independent, peaceful Palestine.

An impressive foundation for this presidential ultimatum already exists. All member states of the Arab League, plus Hamas and Hezbollah, unanimously offered peace-for-withdrawal four years ago. A similar plan called the Geneva Accord recently was announced jointly by former officials of Israel and Palestine. Almost simultaneously, four retired heads of Israeli intelligence even urged full, unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza.

By standing resolutely for justice for Palestinians, who are mostly Muslim, Bush would virtually end anti-American protests and strengthen moderate forces worldwide.

Will Bush liberate America from endless wars and chart a constructive, peaceful new future for our nation? If he does so promptly, he will be a shoo-in for re-election. If he does not, I will join other Republicans—there will be many of us—in urging his defeat.

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The Need to Refocus Our Policy Priorities in The War on Terror

By Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey

I WOULD LIKE to discuss several topics that relate to the administration's current policies



Former Rep. Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey at the 27 CNI hearing, held in Washington, DC (staff photo D. Hanley).

regarding the War on Terror. I believe that, in each case, these topics provide cogent arguments that the administration's policies should change.

Since taking office in January 2001, the administration's actions seem to have followed fairly closely the views of a group of American scholars, writers and government advisors who operate under the title, The Project for a New American Century. This group has generally adopted the views of Richard Perle, author of the recent book *An End to Evil*. I disagree with those views in several respects.

The Problems

I believe that the United States today confronts three major problems in the Middle East.

The first is the religious war (*jihad*) declared against us many years ago by the Islamic fundamentalist Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden's aim has been to weaken the United States and to overthrow those governments in all Muslim countries—including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iraq—which do not follow that interpretation of the Qur'an held by Islamic fundamentalists. We have chosen to call this a War on Terror, believing that the Islamic fundamentalists constitute only a small segment of the world's population of over 1 billion Muslims. We have studiously tried to avoid the characterization of this war as a religious war.

The second problem is the breakdown in negotiations for peace between an Israeli government led by Ariel Sharon and a Palestinian Authority whose leader has been denied negotiating credibility by both Sharon and President Bush.

The third problem may be defined as the challenge whether, after using overwhelming military force to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan and the tyrant Saddam Hussain in Iraq, we can occupy those countries with sufficient military force for long enough to leave in place a democratic government which gives freedom to its citizens, women as well as men.

In adopting the policies to address each of these problems, the decision-making power—since Sept. 11, 2001, at least—has been in the hands of one man, President George W. Bush. The president's positions thus far have run almost directly opposite to those of his father, our 41st president. The elder Bush respected the United Nations, called the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories illegal under international law, and declined to invade Iraq, fearing that there could be no means of a successful exit from Iraq after we toppled Saddam Hussain.

The younger Bush has received advice from sound men of long public service—Colin Powell, Paul O'Neill and Norman Mineta, to name three of the best. Of the president's advisers on the three problems mentioned above, however, the record to date would indicate that by far the most effective has been Richard Perle, the former chairman of the Defense Department's Defense Policy Board, and influential member of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA).

Perle and The Project for a New American Century

Mr. Perle's advice has been public and consistent. Consider the following:

When Newt Gingrich was speaker of the House of Representatives a decade ago, Mr. Perle and

others now holding positions of power in the current administration issued a paper directed to the government of Israel entitled “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.”

The thrust of the paper was that for four years we [Israel] have pursued a policy of “land for peace.” Perle argued that this should be replaced by a policy of “Peace for Peace” and “Peace Through Strength,” including the striking of Syrian military targets in Lebanon, and, if necessary, “selected targets in Syria proper.”

This advice was tantamount to urging Israel to peremptorily go to war against Syria.

Perle wrote further: “Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening and containing and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussain from power in Iraq—an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right—as a means of foiling Syria’s regional ambitions.”

In view of the fact that the alleged weapons of mass destruction possessed by Iraq in 2003 would threaten Israel a great deal more than the United States, I believe that it is highly possible we invaded Iraq last spring as much to protect Israel as to protect the United States.

Perle’s advice may well have affected the decision of Ariel Sharon to visit the Islamic shrine at the Haram al-Sharif (Holy Precinct) or Temple Mount in Jerusalem on Sept. 28, 2000, shortly before President Bush was elected. Prior to Sharon’s action, which he had to know would provoke violence, there had been 18 suicide bombings in the previous seven and a half years. Since Sharon’s visit to the Haram al-Sharif, there have been 101 suicide attacks in less than three and a half years.

Provoking violence may well have been Sharon’s goal.

Sharon commanded the Israeli troops that invaded Lebanon in 1982. When President Reagan’s envoy, Philip Habib, successfully negotiated the withdrawal of the PLO from Beirut, he had obtained the promise of Israel that the Palestinians left behind in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila would not be harmed. Despite this, Sharon ordered the Israeli troops surrounding the camps to stand by and allow Christian Phalange militia to enter the camps and massacre thousands of their non-combatant inhabitants, including women and children. For this he was held responsible for the mass murders by an Israeli investigating commission. Phil Habib commented:

“Sharon was a killer, obsessed by hatred of Palestinians. I had given Arafat assurance that his people would not be harmed, but this was totally disregarded by Sharon, whose word was worth nothing.” After President Bush took office, Mr. Perle joined with others in occasional letters to the president, urging solidarity with Sharon.

On Sept. 20, 2001, nine days after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Perle wrote:

Dear Mr. President,

We write to endorse your admirable commitment to “lead the world to victory” in the war against terrorism.

...Even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism, and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussain from power in Iraq.

...Israel has been and remains America’s staunchest ally against international terrorism,

especially in the Middle East. The United States should fully support our fellow democracy in our fight against terrorism.”

Six months later, on April 3, 2002, Mr. Perle and most of the same group wrote the president again:

We write to thank you for your courageous leadership in the war on terrorism...In particular, we want to commend you for your strong stance in support of the Israeli government as it engages in the present campaign to fight terrorism...we Americans ought to be especially eager to show our solidarity in word and deed with a fellow victim of terrorist violence...

Mr. President, it can no longer be the policy of the United States to urge, much less to pressure, Israel to continue negotiation with Arafat...

Sincerely,

William Kristol, Ken Adelman, Gary Bauer, Jeffrey Bell, William J. Bennett, Ellen Bork, Linda Chavez, Elliot Cohen, Midge Decter, Thomas Donnelly, Nicholas Eberstadt, Hiflél Fradkin, Frank Gaffney, Jeffrey Gedmin, Reuel Marc Gerecht, Charles Hill, Bruce P. Jackson, Donald Kagan, Robert Kagan, John Lehman, Tod Lindberg, Rich Lowry, Clifford May, Joshua Muravohik, Martin Peretz, Richard Perle, Daniel Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Stephen P. Rosen, Randy Scheunemann, Gary Schmitt, William Schneider, Jr., Marshall Wittmann, R. James Woolsey”

President Bush’s First National Security Meeting

With reference to Mr. Perle’s positions it may be helpful to consider what Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ron Suskind has recently written in his book, *The Price of Loyalty*, from notes taken by Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill at President Bush’s first National Security Council meeting on Jan. 30, 2001.

On the afternoon of Jan. 30, 10 days after his inauguration as the 43rd president of the United States, George W. Bush met with his National Security Council for the first time.

The designated topic was “Mideast Policy”...

President Bush is quoted as saying: “We’re going to correct the imbalances of the previous administration on the Mideast conflict. We’re going to tilt it back toward Israel. And we’re going to be consistent.

“Clinton overreached, and it all fell apart. That’s why we’re in trouble,” Bush said. “If the two sides don’t want peace, there’s no way we can force them.”

Then the president halted. “Anybody here ever met [Ariel] Sharon?”

After a moment, Powell sort of raised his hand. Yes, he had.

“I’m not going to go by past reputations when it comes to Sharon,” Bush said. “I’m going to take him at face value. We’ll work on a relationship based on how things go.”

He’d met Sharon briefly, Bush said, when they had flown over Israel in a helicopter on a visit in December 1998. “Just saw him that one time. We flew over the Palestinian camps,” Bush said sourly. “Looked real bad down there. I don’t see much we can do over there at this point. I think it’s time to pull out of that situation.”

Secretary O'Neill's notes indicate the president's position was that the Arab-Israeli conflict was a mess, and the United States would disengage. The combatants would have to work it out on their own.

Powell said such a move might be hasty. He remarked on the violence on the West Bank and Gaza and on its roots. He stressed that a pullback by the United States would unleash Sharon and the Israeli army. "The consequences of that could be dire," he said, "especially for the Palestinians."

Bush shrugged. "Maybe that's the best way to get things back in balance."

Powell seemed startled.

"Sometimes a show of strength by one side can really clarify things," Bush said.

President Bush thereafter met with Sharon on many occasions, calling him "a man of peace." He did disengage from the peace process, and has remained personally disengaged.

I believe it fair to conclude that the President's position on Jan. 30, 2001 and thereafter has responded far more closely to Mr. Perle's advice than to that of Secretary of State Powell. The president's characterization of Sharon as "a man of peace" indicates he may not have learned of Ambassador Habib's opinion of Sharon's integrity with regard to the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982 during the Reagan administration.

The Separation of Church and State And the War on Terror

There is another position of President Bush that I believe deserves re-examination. This is the emphasis he has placed on his Christian beliefs and his search for support from Christian fundamentalists who oppose the creation of the Palestinian state envisioned in U.S. Resolution 242, the cornerstone of every president's policy since 1967, and particularly the policy of his father.

The president has occasionally spoken in a manner indicating that he does not understand or believe in a basic principle of our Constitution, the separation of church and state. The First Amendment's language is clear and simple:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the freedom of press..."

This separation of church and state was deliberate, and reflected our forefathers' experience of religious persecution in the European countries from which many of their families had come. The First Amendment by no means indicated that we were not a nation under God. It simply protected the right of everyone to choose which God they might worship, if any, and, equally important, protected an individual's right to be free from religion altogether.

The framers of the First Amendment recognized that where religious faith had been coupled with governmental power there had often been terrible consequences. There had been centuries of bloodbaths in England and Europe over state-imposed religion.

Jefferson described the First Amendment as building a wall between church and state.

James Madison, the primary author of the First Amendment, had said: "Religion and government will both exist in greater purity the less they are mixed together."

Citing James Madison, the Supreme Court ruled in 1878: "Religion or the duty we owe the

Creator was not within the cognizance of civil government.”

Jefferson’s Statute of Religious Liberty, adopted by the State of Virginia in 1786, before the U.S. Constitution, was to provide complete liberty of opinion and allowed no interference by government unless religious conduct might result in overt acts against peace and good order.

The father of Republican conservatism, Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, said in 1981: “Religious factions will go on imposing their will on others unless the decent people connected to them realize that religion has no place in public policy. They must learn to make their views known without trying to make their views the only alternatives.”

It may be the time for the president to publicly state that he supports this Constitutional principle. If nothing else, this would emphasize one of the difficulties we face in his announced determination to force democratic governments on Muslim countries where the Islamic faith is often construed to require church control over governmental decisions.

The Unholy Alliance

Accepting the premise that Bin Laden’s declaration of war 10 years ago was against every government not based on the fundamentalist Islamic view of the Qur’an, including Iraq as well as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United States, our president has chosen two unfortunate allies for this war.

The fundamental Christians who believe there should be no Palestinian state are one; the fundamentalist Jews who read the Bible to mean they own the Palestinian territories as a matter of God-given right are the other. In both cases this only-too-apparent alliance serves to fuel the anger of our fundamentalist Islamic enemies and to help them attract young Muslims to make war on our occupying forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The president’s close association with Sharon, his failure to act forcefully to make our alleged ally cease building the wall in Palestinian territories and his failure to demand that Sharon commence the dismantling of the settlements gives credence to the Islamic fundamentalists who seek to attract young Muslims to their cause.

This seems to me to be a tragic mistake.

As Thomas Friedman has said recently, our Mideast policy is insane. It’s time to turn away from all religious fundamentalists, particularly the fundamentalist Zionist settlers who believe that there should never be a Palestinian state. The fundamentalist Christians, of course, agree. In Pat Robertson’s recent book, *Bring It On*, he calls the idea of a Palestinian state “wrong” and “outrageous.”

In his recent book, *An End to Evil*, Richard Perle advocates military domination in the Mideast by both Israel and the United States. He gives short shrift to a Palestinian state as envisioned by U.N. Resolution 242. Perle castigates the State Department and CIA bureaucracies, former National Security Advisers Brent Scowcroft and Colin Powell, and argues that the Pentagon is the only truly adequate arm of the U.S. government.

I would hope the president will reject Mr. Perle’s present advice and listen carefully to Secretary of State Powell and the career people at State and the CIA.

If the president can bring himself to turn away from the Christian and Zionist fundamentalists, he could obtain strong support from the mainstream Jewish community, which supports the Palestinian right to statehood and accepts the fact that the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories constitute the primary barrier to a lasting peace and the security of Israel. The

president need only heed the words of the largest Jewish religious community in the United States, the Jewish Reform congregations.

The Courageous Leadership of America's Jewish Reform Rabbis

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, founded in 1889, is made up of some 1,800 rabbis from Reform Jewish congregations throughout the United States. Its president sits on the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, representing 52 national Jewish organizations. Of Jewish congregations in America, perhaps 50 percent are Reform, 40 percent Conservative and 10 percent Orthodox. Its current and first woman president is Rabbi Janet Marder of Congregation Beth Am in my old congressional district on the San Francisco Peninsula.

While the fundamentalist Jews interpret the Bible as indicating that God gave the Jews exclusive ownership of the lands of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) occupied in the 1967 war, the Reform Jews have long supported the land-for-peace negotiations which envision a Palestinian state. The concept of a Palestinian state is anathema to the Jewish religious fundamentalists, despite the mandate of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 that there be a Palestinian State when and if the Arab nations should accept the rights of a secure Jewish state with defined borders.

The original settlers in the occupied territories were primarily fundamentalist Jews. In recent years, however, the settlements have been tremendously expanded under the leadership of Ariel Sharon by Jews of diverse views who wanted the benefit of affordable housing indirectly subsidized by the U.S. government. Every U.S. president prior to George W. Bush has agreed that the Jewish settlements created in the occupied territories since the 1967 war are illegal under international law. Further, our presidents, and the president's father in particular, have held that for Resolution 242 to be ultimately enforced as the basis for a lasting peace in the Middle East, the bulk of those settlements will have to be dismantled.

Standing in the way of the abandonment of the settlements are (1) Ariel Sharon, (2) the right-wing, ultranationalist fundamentalist settlers, and (3) the costs of relocation of the settlers.

In March 2003, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted a landmark resolution. The Conference's resolution—despite its historical inaccuracy regarding the launch of the 1967 war, which Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin described as a “war of choice”—included the following language:

Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip came about as a result of a war not of her making.

Nevertheless, 35 years later, we acknowledge that Israel's presence there and the establishment of certain settlements by [Israeli] governments of all political complexions have served to deepen the sense of enmity and distrust felt by the Palestinian population and thus are an impediment to peace.

We reiterate our call to the government of Israel to adopt a policy of neither building nor expanding settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

We recognize that acceding to the Palestinian right to self-determination will inevitably involve the evacuation from their homes of many settlers currently living in areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

We again call upon the Bush administration vigorously to engage both Israel and the Palestinians in imaginative, bold and sustained efforts to help bring to an end the current

violence and to work toward a just and lasting peace.

These words regarding the Palestinian right of self-determination and a required evacuation of settlers are brave words of leadership and inspiration. Coming as they do from a distinguished Jewish religious organization, strongly opposing the opinions of fundamentalist Orthodox Jews and ultranationalist right-wing Zionists, these words, if only heeded by our president and the majority party in Congress, could change and reinvigorate the painful process toward a just and lasting Mideast peace.

Those same words, I believe, would be echoed by American Protestant and Catholic leaders of all faiths save one—that of the Christian fundamentalists whose current leader, the Rev. Pat Robertson, has stated that a Palestinian state would not only be “wrong,” but an “outrage.”

The political dilemma in this election year is that President George Bush, a self-defined Christian, considers the fundamentalist Christians as part of his electoral “base.” He won his presidency in 2000 by savaging Sen. John McCain in South Carolina, identifying himself there with the Christian fundamentalists of Bob Jones University.

To date the president has identified himself throughout the world not only with the fundamentalist Christians but also with that “man of peace,” Ariel Sharon. He needs to rethink his unqualified support for Sharon. If he does so I believe he will be supported by a majority of America’s Jewish citizens.

Clearly America’s Jewish Reform congregations have joined the majority of the Israeli people in desiring a Mideast peace that permits a Palestinian state and requires dismantlement of most of the settlements. This goal came close to achievement toward the end of the Clinton administration, with near-agreement reached at Taba on secure, defined borders for both a Jewish and a Palestinian state.

President Bush’s decision at his first National Security Council meeting to reject this process, “tilt” toward Israel, “pull out of the situation,” and allow “a show of strength” to settle things, seems wrong-headed and can cause needless loss of life in Iraq and Afghanistan. Why should the president not endorse the Reform rabbis’ position and ask moderate Islamic and Christian leaders to do likewise?

It is not easy to lead in peace efforts in the Mideast, either in Israel or in an Islamic country. Until last March’s public statement by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, it has not been easy for Jewish leaders to do so in the United States.

The action of the Council of American Rabbis has changed all this. A president who urged America’s Muslim and Christian leaders to join the Reform rabbis would be giving courageous leadership toward peace. There aren’t enough American fighting men and women to carry out Richard Perle’s policy of military domination in the entire Muslim world.

If an American president can show the courage to follow the Conference of Rabbis’ lead, the chances for progress toward Mideast peace may have never been greater.

The Dangers of Military Occupation—One Marine’s View

There is one last point I would like to make from a wholly personal standpoint. Nearly everyone agrees that the overthrow of Saddam Hussain was a good thing for Iraqis and their neighbors. Military occupation, however, is an entirely different matter. The occupier will understandably be hated by those who are occupied.

I say this as a Marine regiment in which I was once privileged to serve, the Fifth Marines, is

presently on their way back to Iraq. The Fifth Marines have a long and proud history dating back to Belleau Wood, Guadalcanal, Okinawa, the Pusan Perimeter, Hue City and Kuwait City.

The Fifth Marines were among the first to cross the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and to take the presidential palace in Baghdad. The Marines took their share of casualties in the rapid advance to Baghdad, but I fear they will face even greater casualties in the next few months unless our president returns our foreign policy to one respecting the United Nations and putting a primary focus on achieving the Palestinian State envisioned so long ago by U.N. Security Council Resolution 242.

I would far rather see the Fifth Marines as part of a U.N. Peacekeeping Force, the role the regiment served in Korea 54 years ago, than as part of a coalition force identified with fundamentalist Christian and Zionists. While the Marines in Vietnam were relatively successful in their relationships with the local populace, and even more so in their successful invasion of Iraq, I fear for their safety as occupiers of the country under this administration's current policies.

Conclusion

As a Republican somewhat familiar with the political processes in this city and elsewhere, it seems reasonable to me that the president now re-examine his previous adherence to the principles espoused by Mr. Perle and the Project for a New American Century.

This would require only the courage to (1) stand up to Ariel Sharon, ordering him to remove the wall he is building between Israel and the occupied territories and commence evacuation of its Jewish settlers; (2) make negotiations for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians his top priority in the War on Terror; (3) accept the reality that democracy in the Muslim world may have to include governments which do not have the separation between church and state which has so blessed the United States; (4) specifically reject the philosophy of both Christian and Jewish fundamentalists; and (5) push for an independent Palestinian state with borders close to those agreed on at Taba.

Finally, I suggest that the administration swallow its pride, bring the U.N. back into Iraq, and surrender control of the occupying forces to the United Nations, removing American troops from Iraq at the earliest possible opportunity.

I don't think it's that hard to admit mistakes and change course for the son of one of our great presidents, George H. W. Bush. It might also help him get re-elected.

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[Home](#) > [Archives](#) > [April_2004](#) > undefined