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US Policy Seen in the Light of Lebanon and the Persian Gulf

Recent events have provided both an opportunity and a necessity to reexamine some of the basic perceptions and assumptions underlying the policies of the United States toward the Middle East. The collapse of the Reagan administration's policy in Lebanon revealed grave errors in the way US policy makers perceived the politics of that hapless Middle Eastern country, rather like the collapse of the Carter administration's policy in Iran earlier revealed similar errors about the politics of that apparently solid Middle Eastern ally.[1] And the increasing involvement of US naval vessels and military aircraft in the spreading Persian Gulf war carries with it the probability that comparable errors in perceiving the Middle East will lead to even more costly failures in the region.

The repercussions from the advance of Syria and the retreat of Israel in Lebanon in turn raise anew the question of US policy toward the disputed territories of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza District. Similarly, the repercussions from the growth of Shiite power in Lebanon and the growth of US involvement in the Persian Gulf raise anew the question of US policy toward the Iranian-Iraqi War and particularly toward the spread of the Shiite revolution from Iran into other countries of the Gulf and to the west. This essay accordingly will examine the need to reconstruct US policies toward (1) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and (2) the Iranian-Iraqi War, upon new and truer perceptions and assumptions about the realities of politics in the Middle East.

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US Policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Centrality of the Disputed Territories

The United States and Israel each held national elections in 1984 which will set the course of their countries for several years to come. The period after these elections, particularly early 1985, might provide an opportune time to reconstruct US-Israeli relations on a foundation that accords with new conditions, on a basis that will be more mature and realistic than has been the case in recent years.

The essential commonality of interests between the United States and Israel is well known, and the fundamental basis of US-Israeli relations is quite sound. The United States values Israel as a strategic asset, one that provides a wide range of military and intelligence benefits for the US policy of containing the military expansion of the Soviet Union in the Middle East.[2] The United States also values Israel as a political democracy, one with which Americans share political, cultural, and religious norms and practices. From time to time, of course, there have been disputes about a variety of issues, such as sales of US advanced weapons to Arab countries, the amount of US aid to Israel, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. But these disputes have generally been temporary, and after the issue has been decided, the fundamental equilibrium of US-Israeli cooperation has been restored.

There is indeed only one major and continuing issue of dispute in US-Israeli relations, and this concerns the territories that Israel acquired as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, that is, the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza District. It is the argument of this essay that the position of the United States on this issue rests upon assumptions which no longer correspond to the realities of the Middle East, and that the time and the opportunity have come to bring this dispute to an end.

The New Realities of the Disputed Territories. It has now been a generation since Israel entered into these territories. Israel has now ruled the West Bank and East Jerusalem almost as long as did Jordan, and the Gaza District almost as long as did Egypt. And it is usually forgotten that the Jordanian occupation, like the Israeli one, was never recognized by other Arab states. Indeed, the only states that recognized Jordanian rule in these territories were Britain and Pakistan.[3]

It has also been almost a generation that US administrations have been fruitlessly objecting to the continuing, expanding, and maturing Israeli presence within the territories. This presence now comprises a dense network of many strands—economic integration, political administration, military security, and permanent Jewish settlements—and it is now highly institutionalized. Indeed, in the view of many sober and responsible analysts of this presence—including both those who support it and those who criticize it—it is now irreversible.[4]

Of these strands, the permanent Jewish settlements in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) have been especially controversial from the perspective of the United States. But these settlements have also become especially important in establishing the irreversibility of the Israeli presence in the disputed territories. They now compose an ensemble of considerable variety and great extent:[5] (1) towns and settlements surrounding Jerusalem; (2) settlements on the western ridges of the Samarian mountains overlooking the coastal plain; (3) settlements in the Jordan River Valley; and (4) settlements in the heartlands of Judea and Samaria adjacent to Arab cities, such as Nablus, Ramallah, and Hebron.

Of these categories of settlements, the first three are overwhelmingly supported by all major groups and parties in Israel, including both the Likud and the Labor coalitions. The settlements surrounding Jerusalem and on the Samarian ridges are natural extensions, indeed suburbanizations, of the cities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Many of these settlements are bedroom communities that are within a thirty-minute commute from their city. These settlements rest upon a solid base of economic and social realities. It is precisely their suburban quality, their very ordinariness, which will make them an enduring presence, whatever the ebbs and flows of Israeli party politics. Indeed, they will become a solid mass that will help guide that ebb and flow; in the multiparty Israeli political system, even a small group, if it represents a concentrated and consistent interest, can acquire substantial leverage, or at least a veto power, as an indispensable element of the governing coalition in the Knesset. The suburban voters on the West Bank are likely to become such an interest.[6]

The settlements in the Jordan River Valley grow out of the Allon Plan of Labor as well as the supporting policies of Likud. Lying between the Jordan River itself and the hills rising to the west, they result from the recognition that the most, indeed the only, viable eastern strategic frontier for Israel is the river and its hills. These frontier settlements form a line reaching from the Red Sea to the Sea of Galilee; two-thirds of this distance lies in the West Bank territory acquired in 1967. Without the settlements in the Jordan River Valley and on the western ridges of the Samarian mountains, central Israel around Tel Aviv is only nine to thirteen miles wide. With them, the width of central Israel quadruples to about forty-five miles. These settlements rest upon a solid base of obvious military necessity.

Indeed, in Israel the only controversial category of settlements is the fourth, those in the heartlands of Judea and Samaria adjacent to Arab cities. But even these settlements are now supported by such powerful and committed political constituencies that even a new Labor government is most unlikely to abandon them.

Given these new realities about the disputed territories, why have US policy makers persisted in their increasingly sterile and counterproductive opposition to the Israeli presence?

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The American Conception of the Disputed Territories. At one level, the motives behind the US position have been to maintain good ties with the "moderate Arab states," to appear "even-handed" in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This has especially been the case in regard to Saudi Arabia, with its obvious oil wealth; Jordan, with its presumed strategic potential (for example, a possible strike force for use in the Persian Gulf); and even Syria, which US State Department officials have perennially hoped to wean away from the Soviet Union.

This view of the importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict for US relations with the moderate Arabs might have been a plausible enough approach in the first few years after 1967. But today, it is now clear that the policies of different Arab states will vary over time for a host of reasons completely unrelated to the issue of the territories.[7] Does anyone really think that any Arab state gives high priority to the PLO, given the fate of the PLO in Arab politics in the past two years? Or that the Jordanian monarchy would be any less rickety and its policy any less vacillating if it had the responsibility to govern the West Bank or had a neighbor in an independent Palestinian state? Or that the Syrian regime would be any less a Soviet client if it had returned to it the Golan Heights?

There is another, more fundamental level of perception, however, which better explains the persistence of the US opposition. Here, the motive behind the US position on the territories has been the idea or premise that the Israeli presence in them is somehow unnatural, that the occupation of the territory of one people by the state of another is not feasible in the contemporary world, that "nationalism" is the relevant issue and the inevitable reality. This premise behind the US opposition to Israeli policy in the territories rests upon the misapplication of European and American conceptions of politics to Middle Eastern realities.

People in the West view the Middle East through the prisms of their own political experiences. For Europeans, this is especially the prism of the nation-state; for Americans, it is especially the prism of the pluralist democracy (although by now, most US policy makers have recognized that this idea is wildly irrelevant to the Middle East, and they have retreated to the European notion). But in the real Middle East, there are no nation-states (other than Turkey), and there are no pluralist democracies (other than Israel itself).

It is true that for about two generations—from about 1945 to about 1975—there was among some Arabs a hope, and among most Europeans and Americans an expectation, that there would soon be real nation-states in the Middle East, perhaps even one great, unified Arab nation-state. But this idea largely faded away in the 1970s, with the death of President Abdul Nasser of Egypt, with the failure of every attempt at unity between Arab states, and with the Islamic revolution in Iran.[8] And the fading of this idea allows us to see what was always the real political structure of the Middle

East, which had been operating there all the time beneath the fog of Arab nationalism.

The Middle Eastern Reality of Millet Societies. The reality of the Middle East always has been a series of political and military centers, or cores, constructed by peoples who are more organized and more militant than their neighbors. Each center, or core, is surrounded by a series of other peoples or ethnic communities who are less organized, less militant, or perhaps merely less numerous than those in the core. Together, the core and the associated peoples form a society. The core people organize the state structure and the military security which in turn surrounds and provides the framework for the entire ensemble of disparate peoples. The associated peoples and their leaders, however, assume many of the other political and administrative tasks involving their own ethnic community.[9]

At its best, this is a system of shared authority and communal autonomy (e.g., Lebanon in its "Golden Age" from 1946 to about 1970). More commonly, it is a system of bureaucratic authoritarianism and precarious autonomy (e.g., Egypt under Sadat). And at its worst, it is a system of secret police and state terror (e.g., contemporary Syria and Iraq).

In Ottoman times, this Middle Eastern reality could be called by rather accurate terms; there was what was known as the "Ottoman ruling institution," which ordered a complex society of ethnic communities, known as "millets." In modern times, however, Westerners have given this reality their own misleading terms; they try to see in the Middle East a series of actual and potential nation-states.

It would be impossible, however, to redraw the map of the Middle East or of any particular state within it so that all or even most ethnic communities have their own states, as in much of contemporary Europe. The ethnic communities of the Middle East are, and always have been, condemned to live several of them together in a wider society and under a "ruling institution," that is, in a state structure organized primarily by one of them.

It would also be impossible, of course, to redesign the societies of the Middle East so that this ensemble of communities could live together in a pluralist political system, as in the United States. This arrangement can work in a society in which religion and politics, church and state, have been largely separated since nearly the origin of the society. However, in the Middle East, nothing like this separation, this "secularization," exists.

There is today, however, one major political system whose ethnic components are organized very much in the way of the Ottoman Empire (and of the Byzantine Empire before it). That is the Soviet Union (like the Russian Empire before it). In the Soviet Union, the Russians (more precisely, the Great Russians as distinct from the Little Russians or Ukrainians and the White Russians or Byelorussians), who have always been more organized and

more militant than their neighbors, have organized the state structure and the military security which, in turn, has surrounded the ensemble of disparate peoples, ranging from Estonians to Kazakhs. In regard to this particular multiethnic system, of course, one would not say that the associated peoples and their leaders assume many of the other political and administrative tasks involving their own ethnic community. Rather, in the Soviet Union, we have something of a worst-case analysis, i.e., secret police and state terror.[10]

It is, however, this very way of organizing an ensemble of ethnic communities, a multinational empire, that makes the Soviet Union such a relevant and useful political model for certain authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. This is especially the case where the regime represents a militant but minority ethnic community, e.g., the Alawi-based regime of Hafez Assad in Syria (the Alawis represent a variation of Shiism) and the Sunni-based regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. In Syria, the Alawis comprise some 12 percent of the population; in Iraq, the Sunnis comprise some 45 percent. A minority regime tends to compensate for its smaller numbers of natural supporters with greater intensity of repression and terror. Such regimes are natural admirers and consumers of Soviet secret police organization, methods and advisors.[11]

The Israeli Practice within the Disputed Territories. The Israeli policy toward the territories they acquired in 1967 is in accord with these enduring military and social realities of the Middle East of "ruling institutions" and "millet societies," but it is so in a relatively benign form.

A glance at a map quickly and clearly shows that any viable framework for military security for the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River would have the military security border be at or near the river and on the Golan Heights. As the core people in that land, the Israelis organize the military security of the area, including the disputed territories. Each core people has always had its political and even spiritual center, the center of the center, so to speak. For the Israelis, of course, this is Jerusalem, an integral part of the system we have described.

The Israelis also provide a wider range of economic and social services than normally has been provided by other core peoples in the Middle East. Many other political, administrative, economic, and social functions in the territories are either shared with or assumed by other authorities, such as local councils of Arab communities and even the Jordanian government.[12]

Different Palestinians respond to this structure in different ways. Some Palestinians see their primary concerns as economic, and their political concerns as primarily local. For them, Middle Eastern practice, economic interests, and political focus converge in making communal and personal autonomy within the Israeli military security framework a viable and acceptable situation.

Other Palestinians weigh concrete economic interests less and value abstract political ideas more. For them, they could come to find their natural political arena to be within Jordan, for, in large measure, Jordan has become a Palestinian society within a Hashemite or Transjordanian state.[13] Amman, the capital of Jordan, is now the largest Palestinian city in the world. The time is not far off where there could be in Jordan a reversal of the cores, when the Palestinians themselves could organize the state structure within Jordan.

The overall system, then, is one composed of (1) an Israeli-organized realm composed of Jewish and Palestinian peoples and (2) a Jordanian-(or potentially a Palestinian-)organized realm of Jordanian and Palestinian peoples. This system, or course, is not a stable one in the sense that nation-states, such as France, or pluralist democracies, such as the United States, are stable (although even here there have been times, such as in 1968, when "stable" was not the first adjective that came to mind). The point, however, is that this is the most stable political system for these lands that the social realities can produce.

More particularly, no Israeli government can accept either a pure American or a pure European model for Israel. Pluralist democracy, American-style, would result in an Israeli state that was no longer distinctively Jewish. A nation-state, European-style, one composed only or overwhelmingly of Jews, would shrink to frontiers even less viable and defensible than those before 1967. For a Jewish state in the Middle East to be secure against its enemies in the Middle East, it must have a state-community structure, Middle Eastern style.

Implications for US Policy. These considerations about millet society in general, and the disputed territories in particular, suggest that the United States would be wise to develop a new policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more in accord with these Middle Eastern realities. The United States could contribute to a more realistic environment in the Middle East by no longer opposing and disputing the Israeli presence in the territories. It would also be sensible, although now obviously controversial, for the United States to better align its diplomacy with this reality by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and by moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In addition, a new US foreign policy that recognized and accepted the realities of the territories, including the centrality of Jerusalem within them and within the wider Israeli realm, would itself liberate political and intellectual energies within the American foreign policy community. For too long, American policy makers and policy analysts have squandered their talents in attempting to reconstruct the always-unstable and now-vanished conditions that existed before 1967, or to construct a European or American fantasy-state among the Palestinians in the West Bank. However, if these

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talents and energies can be harnessed to build on the rock of reality, rather than on the sand of fantasy, the United States, Israel and the more reasonable and constructive Palestinians together can work out a political order that will be as stable, humane, and authentic as the doleful history of the Middle East can permit.

US Policy Toward the Iranian-Iraqi War: The Case for a Partition of Iraq

In the past year, US policy makers have expressed concern about the potential defeat of Iraq by Iran as the final outcome of the long Iranian-Iraqi War. President Reagan and other officials have said that the defeat of Iraq would be against the national interests of the United States. This, in turn, has given rise to speculation about various kinds of military action that the United States might be compelled to undertake, either to contain the Iranian expansion or at least to keep the Iranians from attacking oil tankers in the Persian Gulf.

It is possible, of course, that this issue may become a moot question. The stalemate in the war, which has already lasted four years, may persist, with the Iranian advantage in manpower being contained by the Iraqi advantage in material. There seems to have developed a pattern in the war, in which Iran normally launches a "great offensive," an "Operation Jerusalem," twice a year: once in February, at the time of the anniversary of the coming to power of Khomeini and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran; and once in September or October, before the onset again of winter. The Iranians achieve some initial advances and take some territory, but the Iraqis then contain the Iranians with their firepower and with their progressive escalation into more ruthless tactics, initially the bombing of Iranian ships and towns and later the use of poison gas. The Iranian offensive grinds to a halt, and the stalemate resumes again for another six months or so.

If, however, the Iranians should at last be able to break this pattern, to break through the Iraqi defenses, and to bring about the defeat and overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein, would it really be necessary for the United States to respond in some hostile, and perhaps desperate, way? Here, it is once again useful to consider the millet society nature of Middle Eastern politics.

Iran and Iraq as Multinational Empires. The conventional way to look at both Iran and Iraq is to see them as nation-states; in fact, each is a multiethnic society, indeed a multinational empire.

Iran. Of the total population of Iran of some 40 million, about two-thirds are Farsis, the core ethnic group. Substantial minorities, each concentrated in a peripheral region, are the Azerbaijanis (5 million), Kurds (4 million), Arabs (2 million), Turkomens (1 million), and Baluchis (1 million). On the other

hand, as seen from the perspective of the religious dimension, more than 90 percent of Iran's population is Shiite.

These figures suggest that the Islamic Republic may be able to spread its revolution to other Shiites in the Middle East. But they also suggest that, as the revolution spreads to additional non-Farsi ethnic groups, the government in Teheran could find itself stretched thin beyond its natural ethnic base, and that the Islamic Repuhlic of Iran would have to be content with indirect rather than direct rule, with loyal allies rather than annexed provinces.

Further, the actual extent of the spread of the Shiite revolution may be relatively limited. Other than Iran itself, the countries in which a majority of the population is Shiite are actually only two: Iraq (55 percent) and Bahrain (70 percent). There are substantial minorities in several other countries: Kuwait (24 percent), United Arab Emirates (18 percent), Qatar (16 percent), and Lebanon (about 30 percent). In Saudi Arabia, the Shiites comprise nearly 50 percent of the 1 million population of the oil-rich Eastern Province, but only 8 percent of Saudi Arabia as a whole.[14]

These figures suggest that the Shiite revolution itself would be relatively easy to contain. The waves from its overflow from Iran would first break upon, but in the end would break apart, on the rocks of more numerous ethnic communities, which provide the core peoples and the state structures in most countries in which Shiites reside.

Bahrain, with its large Shiite majority, may not be a rock against revolutionary Shiism; but it is an island, one with a small population (360,000) and with no obvious capacity to be a dynamic center of spreading Shiism. The serious territorial threat, then, actually involves only one country, Iraq.

Iraq. Iranian defeat of Iraq in the Iranian-Iraqi War probably would result in a revolution among the Shiites in Iraq, located in the populous southern half of the country and including Baghdad as well as the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. This region could well be converted into a satellite or, at least, a loyal ally of revolutionary Iran.

However, since Iraq has always been not a nation-state but a multinational empire, a revolution among the Shiites in Iraq would not be the same as a revolution in all of Iraq.

In particular, the Kurds in northern Iran, who are Sunni in religion and comprise some 18 percent of Iraq's total population, would resist this spread of revolutionary Shiism and Iranian control. As they have done many times in the past, they would see in the revolutionary turmoil in the south a "window of opportunity" through which to escape from the hated control of Baghdad.[15]

At the same time, Turkey would see in the Shiite revolution in Iraq its own window of opportunity to split off an oil-rich area of Iraq (including the oil fields of Mosul and Kirkuk) and to make it an ally or even a province of Turkey, as it was in Ottoman times. And, in fact, in the past year and with the

cooperation of the Saddam Hussein regime, the Turks have sent military units into the Kurdish areas of Iraq, to undertake patrols and to provide order while the Iraqi army itself is engaged in the south.[16] An Iranian invasion of the southern region of Iraq and a Shiite revolution could detonate a Turkish occupation of the northern region of the country and the separation of Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq. There could be a partition of Iraq into an Iranian sphere and a Turkish sphere.[17]

Implications for US Policy. This possible outcome of the Iranian-Iraqi War could easily serve, rather than subvert, US interests in the Middle East. Turkey, a traditional US ally and a natural barrier to Soviet expansion, would be strengthened with the addition of revenues from the oil fields of Mosul and Kirkuk. These oil revenues, along with providing other obvious benefits, could go a long way toward financing Turkey's heavy burden of foreign debt with Western banks and governments. Iran, a current US adversary, but also a natural barrier to Soviet expansion, would likewise be strengthened with the end of the military and financial hemorrhage of the war and, in the unlikely event that Iran would annex the areas it occupied, by addition of revenues from the oil field around Basra.

Further, the Shiite revolution would have largely reached its natural limits with the revolution among the Shiites in Iraq. Of course, in the flush of enthusiasm and triumph after the Iranian victory and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Shiite groups scattered around the Middle East would doubtless undertake this or that violent and disruptive action, perhaps, for example, in the oil fields of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. But the natural strength of the majority communities in Middle Eastern countries would soon make its weight felt, and a new and relatively stable equilibrium would ensue.

Indeed, the new equilibrium would likely be more stable than the conditions of the recent past. The partition of Iraq, after all, would mean the partition of a state which for more than a generation, since 1958, has been one of the most destabilizing forces in the Middle East. In its internal politics, it has been one of the most repressive and brutal. And in its observance of the norms of international behavior—its exporting of assassinations, its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, and its use of poison gas—it has been one of the most disruptive, indeed barbaric.[19]

Of course, any chain of events that would bring about benefits to Iran seems extraordinarily controversial, indeed repugnant to most Americans at the present time. This is the country whose revolutionary regime has inflicted the humiliation of the hostage crisis upon the United States, executed thousands of its own citizens, and sent tens of thousands of its own children to die in the marshland battlefields; whose President, Ali Khamenei, recently declared, "if the Americans are prepared to sink in the depths of the Persian

Gulf waters for nothing, then let them come";[20] and whose supreme leader, Ayotollah Ruhollah Khomeini, doing his executive officer one better, also recently declared, "the Americans lack the courage to come to Iran and do something."[21]

Nevertheless, the Iranian revolution, like most other revolutions before it, will one day enter into its Thermidor, its period when revolutionary enthusiasm is succeeded by bureaucratic stabilization. The Iranian revolution, too, will likely produce its Napoleon, now perhaps a young major demonstrating his prowess and his promise in those marshland battlefields at the confluence of the Tigres and the Euphrates, and he will one day enter into his Eighteenth Brumaire, that moment when a military leader seizes political power from revolutionary civilians (or mullahs). At that time, Americans will once more see clearly, as they did from 1945 to 1978, that the United States has a profound interest, indeed a natural ally, in an Iran whose territorial integrity is preserved by a strong central government, whose multiethnic ensemble is contained in a strong state structure centered in Teheran. And the first Americans who will have glimpsed this renewed reality will be those who today are taking a new look.

Notes

1. On US misperceptions of Lebanon, see John Keegan, "Shedding Light in Lebanon," *The Atlantic*, April 1984, pp. 43-60; also David Ignatius, "How to Rebuild Lebanon," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1983, pp. 1139-1156.

2. Steven L. Spiegel, "The U.S. and Israel: A Reassessment," in Steven L. Spiegel, ed, *American Policy in the Middle East: Where Do We Go From Here?* (New York: Josephson Research Foundation, 1983), pp. 139-155.

3. Sasson Levi, "Local Government in the Administered Territories," in Daniel J. Elazar, ed, *Judea, Samaria, and Gaza: Views on the Present and Future* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982), pp. 105-106.

4. Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Project: A Survey of Israel's Policies* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1984) (a summary is given in Benvenisti, "The Turning Point in Israel," *The New York Review of Books*, 13 October 1983, pp. 11-16); Arthur Hertzberg, "Israel and the West Bank: The Implications of Permanent Control," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1983, pp. 1063-1077; Daniel J. Elazar, "Present Realities in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District," in Spiegel, ed, pp. 111-122. For a comprehensive background, see the essays in Elazar, ed.

5. The following section is drawn from Elazar, "Present Realities in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District," pp. 114-117.

6. Benvenisti, West Bank Data Project, pp. 57-60; Walter Reich, "A Stranger in My House: Jews and Arabs in the West Bank," *The Atlantic*, June 1984, pp. 57-60.

7. Haim Shaked, "The U.S. and the 'Moderate Arab States'," in Spiegel, ed, pp. 77-83.

8. Daniel Pipes, "How Important is the PLO?" *Commentary*, April 1983, pp. 17-25; Bernard Lewis, "The Return of Islam," in Michael Curtis, ed, *Religion and Policies in the Middle East* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 9-29. The fading of Arab nationalism is also discussed in several other essays in the Curtis compendium.

9. The pattern of Middle Eastern politics and society is discussed in Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), especially chapters 1-2; Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), especially chapters 1, 7-9; James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979). Gellner reviews Pipes' book in his "Mohammed and Modernity," *The New Republic*, 5 December 1983, pp. 22-26.

10. Daniel Pipes, "The Third World Peoples of Soviet Central Asia," in W. Scott Thompson, ed, *The Third World: Premises of US Policy*, revised edition (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1983), pp. 155-174.

11. Karen Dawisha, "The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1982/3, pp. 438-452.

12. Elazar, "Present Realities in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District," pp. 118-119; Levi, "Local Government in the Administered Territories," pp. 103-122.

13. Mordechai Nisan, "The Palestinian Features of Jordan," in Elazar, ed, pp. 191-209.

14. James A. Bill, "Islam, Politics, and Shiism in the Gulf," *Middle East Insight*, January/February 1984, pp. 3-12.

15. Yosef Gotlieb, "Sectarianism and the Iraqi State," in Curtis, ed, pp. 153-161.

16. Robert D. Kaplan, "Bloodbath in Iraq," *The New Republic*, 9 April 1984, p. 22; Mark A. Heller, "Turmoil in the Gulf," *The New Republic*, 23 April 1984, p. 19.

17. On Turkey's policies in the Middle East, see Ali L. Karaosmanoglu, "Turkey's Security and the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1983, pp. 157-175. The attraction of the Kurds in Turkey to the Turkish state, as well as the nature of millet society more generally, is discussed in Jeffrey A. Ross, "Politics, Religion, and Ethnic Identity in Turkey," in Curtis, ed, pp. 323-347.

18. In past Arab-Israeli wars, Iraq has sent between a third and a half of its army as an expeditionary force to take part in battles against Israel. As a result of the Iranian-Iraqi War, the Iraqi army has doubled in size, from 10 to 20 divisions, and has obviously gained in combat experience. An undefeated postwar Iraq could become a serious threat to Israel's security. This problem is discussed in "The Implications of the Iran-Iraq War for Israel's Security," *For Your Information*, 7 May 1984 (Philadelphia: Consulate General of Israel).

19. An informed, logical, and vigorous critique of US support of Iraq has been made by my colleague at the US Naval War College, Steven T. Ross, in his letter to the editor, "The Case for a Washington Tilt Toward Teheran," *The New York Times*, 25 May 1984, p. A22.

20. *The New York Times*, 30 May 1984, p. A1.

21. *The Washington Post*, 31 May 1984, p. A1.

Commentary by Professor John Spanier

Professor Kurth's paper is both interesting and provocative. But policy makers ought to think hard and long before they accept his solution with equanimity: the demise of Iraq, its division between Turkey and Iran which, we are told, would strengthen the two strongest anti-Soviet states in the area.

I find it a bit ironic that the solution of Iraq's division seems in part to be proposed because Iraq is a rather nasty state because externally it has, among other things, been a leader of the rejectionist front against Camp David and, more recently, used poison gas in its war against Iran; and internally, because it has been a very repressive authoritarian state. If one wishes to focus on morality, is there a significant moral difference between Iraq, far inferior in manpower, using gas, and Iran which uses human wave tactics, including whole classes of 9-12 year old children? If one focusses on policy, Saudi Arabia also rejects, at least in public, the Egyptian-Israeli peace. Despite that, she is considered a friend of the United States and a recipient of US arms. In any event, since when has the nastiness of a particular regime been the critical criterion preventing US alignment with the regime if it is believed to be in America's national interest? Did not the President in 1984 return from Communist China, hardly a model of liberalism and democracy, but a nation with whom the United States has certain common or parallel strategic interests? Churchill's advice the day of the German attack on the Soviet

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Union in 1941 seems sounder advice: He would make a pact with the devil to beat Hitler, said Churchill, but he would "sup with a long spoon" during the time they were allied.

And it is in terms of these strategic interests that Professor Kurth's advice must be questioned. The hope—since this cannot be a certainty—that Iranian Shiite fundamentalism would wash up on the hard rocks of ethnic nationalisms in surrounding societies seems a weak reed upon which to base a US policy of standing by while Iraq is defeated and divided. First, there is the question whether Iran, a multiethnic nation itself, will survive as a national entity. We particularly cannot know whether in the aftermath of Khomeini's death or the possible weakening or collapse of the regime, some of these nationalities might not seek greater autonomy or self-government and independence. And none of this addresses the issue of possible Soviet intervention in northern Iran (as right after World War II). And the expectation that Khomeini's Iran will become a bulwark against the Soviet Union seems rather a fragile one.

Second, and of more immediate concern, how secure can the Persian Gulf oil states feel as Iranian power expands into Iraq? Will they feel any less threatened by the assurance that this expansion will run into a "natural barrier" and that this expansion will recede; or that Khomeini's theological and fanatical regime will suffer an "inevitable" thermidor? In terms of US and Western European interests in the area—be it the advance of the Arab-Israeli peace process or access to oil—Iranian expansion under the present regime has to be considered a disaster. It would also strengthen other anti-Western countries, such as Syria which supports Iran against Iraq and has already humiliated the United States in Lebanon, in their determination to oust Western influence through the area. In short, Iran's defeat of Iraq would jeopardize all Western interests. In turn, this might at some point necessitate US military intervention.

Thus the logic of the situation has for some time suggested that a more appropriate course would be to swing US support to Iraq if it looks as if it may be defeated. Iraq, inferior in manpower and economically hurting because Syria has shut off one of the main oil pipelines, has become increasingly desperate as its original Blitzkrieg mired down in a war of attrition. Iran has refused to negotiate a settlement unless Iraq's President resigns, obviously an unacceptable condition. Thus even if the United States should not encourage an Iraqi attack on Kharg Island, it should not oppose it either. For Iran, with its superior manpower resources and increased oil production to pay for the war, can be hurt mainly by cutting off its oil exports. Given the width of the Hormuth Straits at their narrowest point, the United States and allied navies should not have a serious problem preventing Iranian blocking actions, whether by air attacks or the sinking of ships. Oil tankers in the Gulf can be escorted and protected. Even if insurance rates on these tankers rise sharply, it

is the oil producers who would—or should—have to absorb these increases. Oil is available from other sources, both OPEC and non-OPEC,

Something like this scenario has in fact happened. Iraq has stepped up its air attacks on tankers in a 50 mile "exclusion zone" around Kharg Island and continues to threaten the latter with destruction. Iran, in turn, has been increasing its air attacks on ships getting their oil from other Gulf states, who—especially Saudi Arabia—have helped finance Iraq's war. In this escalating cycle, the United States has vowed again to keep the Straits open but placed two preconditions on US military intervention: one, British and French participation since Western Europe, unlike the United States, remains heavily dependent on Gulf oil; and two, that the Gulf states "stand up and be counted" by furnishing US forces with necessary bases. Washington has sent 400 Stinger missiles to the Saudis who are well equipped with a larger number of more sophisticated F-15s than Iran; and American AWAC and air refueling helped the Saudi F-15s shoot down a couple of Iranian fighters penetrating Saudi air space. Thus the United States is already deeply involved.

The soundness of this increasing US swing to Iraq is, of course, debatable. It is a far from risk-free course and it raises all sorts of issues about which the answers are unclear: whether the United States has the resolve if this conflict becomes a protracted one and American lives are lost; whether the Europeans have the will to defend their vital interests or leave it to the United States; and whether the Gulf states and particularly Saudi Arabia, the recipient of so much American military equipment, will protect themselves if Iran escalates its attacks on tankers to their ports or on their oil fields. But the present course (June 1984) seems a more appropriate policy than watching Iraq be defeated and the hope that somehow the "natural forces" in the area would straighten things out and indeed strengthen anti-Soviet forces, thus enhancing Western interests. All this if only we do nothing!