

Governmental Testimony

STATEMENT OF DR. KENNETH W. STEIN EMORY UNIVERSITY ATLANTA, GEORGIA PRESENTED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Statement presented before the Committee on Foreign Relations

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The Middle East and the End of the Cold War

Mr. Chairman, let me begin by thanking you, the committee members, and your staff for inviting me to provide you with an assessment of the present status and future shape of American foreign policy toward the Middle East.

Over the last forty-five years, American foreign policy priorities toward the Middle East have been relatively consistent and bi-partisan. Our shortcomings have come where we have been unable to curb or control issues that are unfamiliar and anathema to our democratic heritage and western liberal tradition: terrorism, religious extremism, and authoritarian governance. Historically, our foreign policy objectives in the Middle East have been essentially two-fold, with a third component universally and more recently applicable for all regions of the world. First, we have supported and defended Israeli security and have been the central choreographer in the Arab-Israeli negotiating process. Correspondingly, we have sustained those countries that seek normalized relations with Israel. Second, because access to the oil resources remains a priority national interest for the United States in the Middle East, we have protected the territorial integrity of Arab states that produce oil. We sought to deny to the Soviet Union access to and through the region and used our support of both Israel and friendly Arab states to promote that interest. More recently, we added a third component to our foreign policy in general: the promotion of human rights and individual freedoms. In comparison to other regions of the world, the Middle East in general is probably least prepared to advance the pace of human rights and democratic values and yet there are some nascent expressions of progress which deserve notice and reinforcement. The American people have much to be proud about in terms of the foreign policy we have implemented and the goals we have achieved. As we move into the next century, the United States can and should support both these same strategic interests and moral goals. If they are carried out in tandem and with vigor, these interests and goals will reinforce and enrich one another; they will also contribute to broadening democratic processes and limit the growth of the non-pluralistic problems we consider unnerving and deleterious to our interests.

Refining and defining our foreign policy for the region comes at an especially interesting juncture in Middle Eastern history: the end of the Cold War and the beginning of terminating the Arab-Israeli conflict. It comes when indigenously generated issues and in the Arab world are generating new tensions which we must understand fully and factor into our foreign policy making. Neither the end of the cold war nor the deceleration of the Arab-Israeli conflict should prevent the U.S. from reaffirming, sustaining, and expanding defense of our strategic and moral interests. For the United States the Cold War had many aspects and causes. It was geo-strategic and geo-political; it was anti-communist and anti-Soviet; and, it aimed at restructuring political alliances and extending our military successes after World War II. In the United States, our commitment to win the Cold War effected our reliance on military solutions to world problems. Our military industrial complex grew, our infrastructure decayed, our deficits rose, our level of investments declined, and our executive branch increased its potency in making foreign policy. But our value system triumphed. And now we seek to remedy the impact and consequences of the Cold War's domination of our domestic scene. In doing so we can not abandon our former and present foreign successes; a policy of isolation will not insure the broadening of democratic values nor assure us continued access to the region's oil.

Obviously, the existence of the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli conflict influenced the relationship between the superpowers as well as the historical development of the Middle East. The presence of both disputes, in combination with the century long struggle to eliminate Ottoman, British, French, and Russian imperial presence, deflected the natural evolution of political ferment. The few controlled the destiny of many. At the end of World War II, national political figures in the region emerged from a small coterie of bourgeois leaders. The masses were not really represented in political decision-making. Before and after World War II experiments in liberal democratic practices were tried in Egypt and Syria. They failed. Political fragmentation and gridlock ensued. Individual charisma, a politicians region of origin, and family affiliation were stronger attractions than newly organized political institutions such as parliaments or political parties. Sectarian, class, and personal interests prevailed. Attempted government coalitions were short-lived. Compounding the difficulties in the experiments in democratic practices was the sudden failure of Arab regimes to defeat Israel. Those in power were blamed for the Palestine debacle and their nationalist legitimacy tarnished. They were summarily replaced by Arab and pan-Arab nationalist ideologies conveyed by a new class of Arab military leaders. Almost half a century later, after enormous advances in literacy and education in the Arab world, the middle and lower classes now seek a role in political decision-making. The coercive and prolonged nature of military regimes are now being held more accountable for bloated bureaucracies, failed economic systems, employment deficiencies, and abridging individual freedoms. Slowly succumbing to materialism and individualism, general publics in the Arab Middle East want better life styles and they want them sooner. Likewise, the most genuine populist movement in the region in the 1940s, the Moslem Brotherhood, had its evolution truncated by the imposition of pan-Arabist ideology, which itself failed by the end of the 1960s. Fundamentalist Islamic groups in the Middle East today are, in part, revivals of ideas and movements that were outlawed in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the 1950s. Their major appeal to many Moslem Arabs today is the sense of disenfranchisement they sense and the inability of current regimes to deliver goods and services in a timely manner. Today in the Middle East, new social classes want to participate in determining the shape of their future. Some will choose the appeal of Islam as a platform for mobilization, others remain glued to the western values focusing on individual and self which have percolated into the region.

In the Middle East, the end of the Cold War, with the demise of communism and centrally planned economies, has debilitated the validity of leftist economic systems and political philosophies. In the Middle East, the Cold War exacerbated existing tensions and generated new ones. But it also provided a framework in which political leaders in the Middle East operated between the superpowers. The process of playing off one superpower against the other was understood. Available and eager, external patrons seeking clients in the area reluctantly allowed and sometimes encouraged local political leaders to become manipulative between Moscow and Washington. There was a pre-existing history in the Arab Middle East of nationalist leaders playing private games of political intimacy with external powers while often publicly proclaiming the virtues of

Arab nationalism. Thus, the presence of the Cold War meant refining political practices inherited from predecessors; it did not mean halting the practice of seeking foreign patrons for domestic purposes. In the Middle East, an end to the Cold War meant the inapplicability of behavior based upon managing the tension between the superpowers. Blaming external powers for internal shortcomings became less marketable to domestic constituencies. Political leaders realized that they will have to shoulder more personal responsibility for what they do or do not do. Perhaps it is too early to ask these questions but will political accountability in the Middle East be a by-product of the end of the Cold War? Would it be advantageous for political leaders to involve their populations directly in determining how scarce resources are to be allocated? Is it possible that the end of the Cold War might have a salutary effect on greater participation in the Middle East by the common man in deciding his own future?

Just as the Cold War affected political choices and political behavior in the Middle East, the presence of the Arab-Israeli conflict enabled military classes to leverage influence in defining political power and in allocating and diverting resources. Indigenous economic development in the Arab world and in Israel was hampered enormously by the Arab-Israeli conflict. Claiming the need for political stability and sacrifice for the Palestinian cause, rule by military classes often denied or suspended individual freedoms. Approaching the end of the conflict with Israel, means that Arab political leaders who used Israel's presence as a lightning rod for political mobilization will have to find viable substitutes which, for the time being, seem to focus on evoking pride in national identity, stressing secular mores, and establishing distance from potentially destabilizing Islamic fundamentalist groups. Correspondingly, during the conflict Israeli leaders were able to use Arab rejection of the Jewish state as a means to weld internal cohesion and to seek broad external support for the sustenance of Israel's existence.

Indigenous Tensions in the Arab World Today

During these last forty five years when there was a Cold war in the Middle East and an active Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab societies did not remain static. The absence of the Cold War and the receding nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict sharpened the focus on a myriad of social, economic, and political tensions. Arab societies have changed enormously resurrecting old issues and presenting new problems. The co-existence of the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli conflict may be seen as a historical interlude or prolonged chapter in Middle Eastern history. The almost simultaneous deceleration of both conflicts, however, does not eliminate regional tensions spawned by indigenous problems or external meddling. For more than the last half century, Middle Eastern Arabs have been emotionally buffeted between customary styles and modernizing norms. Many have had their energies sapped and patience frayed by insufficient or less than permanent job opportunities. In addition, customary social moorings are being

redefined. Many traditions have become unhinged from their foundations: the family, the village, methods of governance, gender roles, respect for elders, and a redefinition of relations with the West. While new rules of behavior remain in a constant ambiguous state, the region's people are in profound transition, seeking answers that reflect both customary values and non-traditional standards. At one extreme, there is a proud support of rich political and religious cultures that stress solidarity in a common outlook, ethnic unity, and defense of the community. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the blasting intrusion of westernizing values of social behavior that assert the validity of criticism, defense of separate interests, and promotion of individual rights. Philosophical counter-pressures are prevalent as each person reconciles attributes from both the traditional and modern sides of the menu.

For most Middle Eastern Arabs, there are fewer definitive answers than in previous decades. Some people accept Islam as a platform for political mobilization; others dread the prospect that Islam will abridge newly discovered individual freedoms. Some want democracy to flourish in the Arab world; others fear that democracy will elect and legitimize the "wrong" group with the "wrong" values. Some want to make peace with Israel; others find the prospect abhorrent. Some condemn the allied air attacks against Iraq as intended to retard Arab scientific development and to deny the emergence of Arab power; others laud the aggression because they fear that Saddam Hussein's hegemonic interests are pervasive. Both Egypt and Kuwait were disappointed by the recent allied air attacks: Egypt found them too heavy-handed, Kuwait found them insufficient. Before the 1991 Gulf War, the appropriate Arab adage was, "Me and my brother against my neighbor; me, my brother, and my neighbor against the foreigners." Before the Gulf War, Western physical presence on Moslem-Arab soil was considered offensive at best, harking back to the first half of this century when the Ottomans, British and French dominated the Middle East. Today the United States and foreigners are not only trusted, but accepted and sought after for protection of national interests. We are also seen as a beacon for fairness, freedom, and defense of personal rights.

In parts of the Arab Middle East today, social and intellectual fluidity prevails. Discomfort occurs because answers are amorphous and mercurial. But introspection is directed, prevalent, and compelling. In staggering for resolutions to these issues, hidden failures are now admitted more often in public. A freer Arab press in some capitals passionately chronicle unfulfilled expectations. Frustrated personal and pan-Arab aspirations are prevalent. Although recognition of Israel is inevitable and pending, there is no realistic prospect for the tangible fulfillment of a Palestinian national identity. Arab recognition of Israel's presence in the Middle East acknowledges a failure to rid the region of the Jewish state, which is itself a major cultural admission. Pan-Arab goals are no longer realizable. No Arab leader would deny the presence of profound Arab disunity and powerlessness, reflected in the inefficacy of Arab organizations to foster collaboration in defense and economic matters. Failure to find an Arab political solution to the Kuwaiti-Iraqi dispute prior to the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was symptomatic of gridlock in the Arab League. All these unresolved concerns create a low-grade ferment among many classes in the Arab world. But even in the absence of

pressurized political unrest, there is a negative dynamic among many population segments.

Finally, the presence of oil and its derivative revenues are coveted resources. External powers will continue to compete for insured access to the region's oil resources; countries in the region compete for revenues from the oil-producing countries. Although the recent abundance of oil wealth transformed the physical landscape of the region, it also caused national selfishness, petty haughtiness, influenced the work ethic, and falsely inflated expectations. Oil has continued to create enormous jealousy and genuflection within the region. Its presence caused enormous labor migrations within the Arab world in the 1970s; its decline caused enormous economic dislocations at the end of the 1980s. As much as Arab countries with surplus labor forces enjoyed remittances from their citizens in the 1970s, oil production declines caused equal or greater economic distress on these same countries and peoples. Instead of oil revenues judiciously used for pan-Arab cooperation in social and economic development, there remained in the early 1990s considerable envy if not outright disgust held by the population-rich, oil-poor states for the population-poor, oil-rich states.

Three American Foreign Policy Objectives and Their Corollaries

American foreign policy will have to consider these problems, but perhaps not have to define policy options for all of them. Instead the United States should concern itself with managing the loose ends in three areas where it can demonstrate success and where the national interest is served: advancing the Arab-Israeli peace process, enhancing bilateral relations with Israel and Arab states, and trying if possible to cope with the enormous social and political changes which are occurring in the region. Admittedly, in the last several decades, we have made some mistakes in our foreign policy in the Middle East, such as turning an almost blind eye toward Saddam Hussein's military build-up in the 1980s, trading arms for hostages with Iran, and continuing the absence of a national energy policy. It seems that we have done better with the problems of Middle Eastern states that are geographically contiguous or close to Israel - - and that we have had less success or more difficulty in managing problems in our relationships with the countries that sit astride the Persian Gulf. But, overall, we have an estimable track record, one upon which we can systematically build as we aim to preserve American national interests in the region well into the next century.

1. Support for Israel and the Arab-Israeli Negotiating Process

Every president since Harry Truman has supported Israel's democracy and its right to live within secure and recognized borders. Shared values, common interests, and overlapping concerns remain deep between the people of Israel and a very large majority of people in the United States. Our intrepid bi-partisan commitment toward Israeli security and our consistent endorsement of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as the functional framework for peace have placed us at the beginning of the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict. That moral and strategic commitment to Israeli security and territorial integrity took on a new dimension two decades ago after the October 1973 War, namely diligent American promotion and engagement in an Arab-Israeli peace process. The United States is recognized by Arabs and Israelis alike as the only acceptable catalyst for Arab-Israeli negotiations. Even before the end of the Cold War, Washington was the only trusted mediator. Only the United States has a proven record of accomplishment in fostering Arab-Israeli agreements. We are in the peace-making business in the Middle East, and our involvement in that process is feverishly sought by all sides. We should pursue that obligation in a very vigorous fashion diplomatically. We must establish foreign policy initiatives with allies such as the European community and the economic giants of the Pacific Rim which undergird the political progress. We cannot forget that those who oppose the negotiating process in the Middle East, those who oppose peace between Arabs and Israelis, thrive on the economic hardships faced by many in the Middle East today.

Our prolonged bilateral relations with Israel and individual Arab states have afforded us opportunities to meet challenges and solve problems. Though there are many reasons why Soviet penetration failed to take permanent root in the Arab Middle East, one factor was our strong and continuous commitment to Israel as a democracy and as a strategic asset. The Cold War and other world-wide preoccupations kept us from focusing on the importance of generating more positive relations with Arab states in the region. Forty years ago, John Foster Dulles had anything but a disdainful attitude toward Egyptian President Nasser; twenty years ago this month, President Sadat's national security adviser could barely get the attention of the American Secretary of State and have him focus on Egypt's interest in finding a diplomatic solution to removing Israel's presence in Sinai. Secretary of State Kissinger was focused on wrapping up the Vietnam talks. It took the October 1973 War to engage the American administration's involvement in the Arab-Israeli negotiating process, a process to which we have sustained central and effective commitment. Last week, President Husni Mubarak's key political adviser was huddled with State Department officials about how to solve a myriad of issues, not the least of which is the thorny problem of the Palestinian deportees. Our positive relations with Arab states allowed us to confront Saddam

Hussein in 1990-1991. We met the challenge by asking governments in the region to shoulder responsibilities for their own defense. Two dozen other countries joined the international coalition or supported it because they collectively decided not to tolerate the day-light hijacking of another country. Continued, vigorous support of our relationship with Israel and Arab states will allow us to support a structure of peace in the region built upon trust and good will. There need not be an active external threat, such as Saddam Hussein, for the countries of the region to understand that cooperation and economic development are in their respective national interests. That is why twelve Arab countries, Israel, and thirty other states are participating in the multilateral talks that are accompanying the Arab-Israeli bilateral discussions.

2. Access to Middle Eastern Oil and Stability of Arab Oil Countries

In the continued absence of a national energy policy that would steadily wean us away from dependence on imported oil, there remains the need to insure global access to Middle Eastern oil at a reasonable price. Our political leaders articulated a policy stating that the stability of the Persian Gulf and the territorial integrity of Arab Gulf states are in the strategic interest of the United States. President Carter made this point in his January 1980 State of the Union address; toward the end of his administration, President Reagan reflagged Kuwaiti tankers; and President Bush responded with the dispatch of half-a-million fighting men and women as part of the international coalition. Since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, we have continued our policy of protecting the integrity of Arab Gulf states and access to Middle Eastern oil by quarantining Saddam Hussein's belligerent intentions, creating military agreements with Arab Gulf states, and pre-positioning supplies in the area for a future eventuality. The Arab states that sit on the western side of the Persian Gulf continue their deep interest in having a strong American commitment to their security, an interest that meshes with our need for access to Middle Eastern oil sources.

3. Support for Human Rights and Democratic Ideals

Mr. Chairman, few will debate that the end of the Cold War between Washington and Moscow is perhaps the most significant international event to have occurred since

the end of World War II. Containment of communism and denial of Soviet influence are no longer the overriding influence in making and implementing American foreign policy. Just as our democratic ideals had an impact on the fall of eastern European communism and an equally dramatic impact on the former Soviet Union, they continue to cause ferment and debate in the Middle East -- a region not generally accustomed to supporting the rights of the individual over the interests of the community. The Arab Middle East is not a region of the world where a minister-designate for office, such as Attorney General, would be forced to withdraw their nomination because of the influence of public opinion; it is not a region of the world where talk radio or television personalities readily debate the pros and cons of government policy without some fear of officially sanctioned retribution. But the exportation of our forty-year-old domestic agenda, which has focused on promoting the rights of the individual in society, is having its salutary impact and influence upon some countries in the region. Even without the overt advocacy of civil rights, even without the demand for equal status of women, and even without the creation of a Bill of Rights, many Middle Eastern countries are experiencing changes where we had some influence. Bernard Lewis, who is considered by many to be one of the most gifted Middle Eastern historians alive today recently wrote,^{i [1]}

The democratic ideal is steadily gaining force in the region and increasing numbers of Arabs have come to the conclusion that it is the best, perhaps only, hope for the solution of their economic, social, and political problems. The prospects for Middle Eastern democracy are not good. But they are better than they have ever been before.

I thoroughly concur with the Secretary of State-designate Warren Christopher's remarks at his Senate confirmation hearings on January 13, 1993: "Promoting democracy does not imply a crusade to remake the world in our image. Rather support for democracy and human rights abroad can and should be a central strategic tenet in improving our own security."

The United States made human rights an integral standard of American foreign policy in the late 1970s. In the Middle East today, there are, for example, growing press freedoms in Egypt and Jordan which we must nurture and support. As the most powerful democracy in the world, we have an obligation not to retreat from our responsibility to aid people struggling to establish democratic ideals. Successive presidents and their secretaries of state have said that protecting Israeli security and its democracy is compatible with the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people. The United States is in a unique position to support the articulation and defense of human rights and individual freedoms as part of the Arab-Israeli negotiating process and as part of our effort to insure long-term stability in the region.

Continued Engagement in the Arab-Israeli Negotiating Process

Let me first outline briefly why and how we can pursue the Arab-Israeli peace process. The Clinton administration and this Congress are heirs to an enviable status in the Middle East. There is opportunity of extraordinary potential because we are the only superpower and because we are the only acceptable mediator for Arab-Israeli negotiations. Like Secretary of State Henry Kissinger after the October 1973 War, Secretary of State James Baker shrewdly cobbled together feasible diplomatic processes which resulted in Middle East peace conferences and bilateral negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. When President Carter entered the negotiating process in 1977, significant diplomatic progress had already been achieved. All sides were motivated toward achieving a comprehensive settlement, but individual Arab rivalries prevented President Sadat from moving toward completion of his goal, the complete return of Israeli-held Sinai. Sadat went to Jerusalem and subsequently arrived at the historic Camp David accords and Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Presidents Reagan and Bush repeatedly supported the outlines of the 1978 Camp David formula: a two-track approach of seeking peace treaties between Israel and its Arab neighbors and of supporting the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people in the context of Israeli security. This was the formula developed for the 1991 Madrid Conference and the subsequent bilateral talks. In fostering a negotiating process, Washington has also promoted policies aimed at the stability of Arab states which are willing to commit themselves to normalized diplomatic relations with Israel. Our strong relationship with Egypt is a superb by-product of that endeavor. Most recently -- and advantageous to the states of the region -- are the considerations given for broader Middle Eastern regional development undertaken through the multilateral talks that have also become part of the Madrid process.

Second, American prestige and capacity to influence regional politics were raised to unprecedented heights by the successful conclusion of the Gulf War. Washington demonstrated an unmistakably firm commitment to preserve the security and territorial integrity of Arab states. We did that and we left the region, thereby countering all claims that Washington was embarked on some course of neo-imperialism aimed at occupying the region as the British and French had done during the past two centuries. While prosecuting the Gulf War, Washington did not waver from its long-term commitment to protect Israeli security. The results of the Gulf War gave all sides either a positive or negative incentive to become involved in the negotiating process. Egypt saw the outcome of the Gulf War as a welcome opportunity to reignite its twenty-year effort to reach a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement. A refashioned Arab-Israeli negotiating process allowed Cairo to pursue its favored role as consequential link between Arab states, the PLO, the United States, and Israel. Arab radical fringes were set on the margins. When Syria participated in the international coalition allied against Saddam

Hussein, the Arab radicals who opposed the Arab-Israeli negotiating progress possessed no center around which to organize. While the "Arab street" disliked Washington's coordinated military forays against Iraq, the international and UN sanctioned coalition did not violate an Arab capital by taking the land war into Baghdad. If Baghdad had been decimated and its population eradicated, Washington would have faced an inevitable political backlash from its Arab coalition partners. Consequently, after the war, Washington may have been denied the ability to forge the new Arab political coalition that was necessary to support the negotiating process. Both Egypt and Syria deftly dampened respective domestic opposition to the war against Iraq.

Third, at the war's conclusion, Israel felt more strategically secure than at any previous time in its history. From Israel's view, Iraq was militarily devastated and was internationally quarantined. Inter-Arab politics were ripe with divisiveness, tension, and recrimination. The PLO was debilitated politically, and the Palestinian people in the territories were sufficiently disadvantaged economically and politically to neutralize the international attention achieved during the previous five years of the Palestinian intifadah. In the post-war period, the PLO needed to repair its tarnished credibility after having backed the wrong side; the Israelis needed money to absorb Russian and Ethiopian immigrants; the Syrians needed an alternative to the Soviet Union; and Jordan needed to show that it was part of the solution, not part of the problem. The results of the Gulf War conclusively reaffirmed that only Washington could wield the authority to guide the negotiating process for the purpose of sustaining political stability. Although these truths were not overwhelmingly embraced, they were not to be denied. Israel was delighted that its closest international ally had a firm and virtually exclusive hand on the rudder of negotiations. Given that reality and Israel's traditional skepticism for resolutions and votes at the United Nations, it is not surprising that Israel wants to continue to keep Arab-Israeli peace-making and peace-keeping away from the influence of the United Nations.

Fourth, as already noted, the end of the Cold War allowed the United States to shape the negotiating process in an essentially unobstructed fashion. As the United States gained prestige, the U.S.S.R. lost power proportionately faster. When the pre-negotiations started for the convocation of the October 1991 Madrid Middle East Conference, the U.S.S.R. played merely a ceremonial role in cobbling together the procedures which spawned the conference. Within months of the conclusion of the Madrid meetings in November 1991, the Soviet Union itself had dissolved. Washington possessed an uninhibited ability to conduct foreign policy without concern for Soviet interests in the region. The United States was able to conceive and to implement a negotiating process undisturbed by outside meddling. For regional actors, the end of the Cold War narrowed political choices and options. Syria and the PLO, in particular, possessed less political room in which to maneuver. There was no longer a Soviet patron capable of acting as a political counterweight to Washington; Moscow could no longer provide adequate military and logistical assistance to any of its long-term associates. The aborted August 1991 coup in the Soviet Union conclusively ended any remaining illusions of a Moscow phoenix.

Fifth, no one could afford to disengage from Washington's assistance in the negotiating process. Washington had the historical legacy of successfully shepherding previously negotiated Arab-Israeli agreements; only the United States was seen as capable of providing the necessary guarantees and assurances. In 1989 and 1990, Secretary of State Baker unsuccessfully tried to bring the Israelis and the Palestinians together. Rather than focusing on contentious issues of negotiating substance in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Baker concentrated on creating a suitable procedural framework for a Middle East peace conference which would be a symbolic opening to direct bilateral negotiations. Baker used the sense of apprehension, vulnerability, and uncertainty about political stability in the region to make all sides dependent upon Washington's good offices. A positive dynamic was created in which all sides understood the benefit of sustaining the negotiations, even if the process was imposed by consensus, even if the progress was slow and arduous. Washington was the acceptable address for fostering compromises necessary to convene the conference and sustain the bilateral talks. There was also a prevalent negotiating axiom: concessions were more easily made to Washington than to the other side in the negotiations before and after Madrid. Without having formulated the negotiating process, the Clinton administration finds itself overseeing the beginning of the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sixth, after the Gulf War and after Madrid, Syria and the Palestinians were encouraged by the Bush administration's attitudes and actions, which they felt were more compatibly harmonious than previous ones. Damascus perceived an American commitment that the negotiating process would be based on the premise of an exchange of land for peace. In addition, Damascus and the Palestinians were encouraged when the Bush administration withheld Israel's loan guarantees for aiding Russian and Ethiopian immigrant resettlement. Damascus was relieved (and thus more prone to negotiating) when the Likud party was replaced by the more flexible Labor party in the June 1992 Israeli parliamentary elections. After Labor took control of the Israeli-Syrian bilateral talks, the tense and acrid negotiating environment was replaced by more sensitive and sensible tones.

Seventh, the negotiating environment remains very ripe for more progress. In Washington and the Middle East, participants in the negotiating process see great risk in not continuing. During a significant portion of President Reagan's eight years in office, Washington was not willing to become involved in efforts to jump-start negotiations because neither Arabs nor Israelis were ready to move beyond the Egyptian-Israeli treaty or to agree on the implementation of Palestinian autonomy. The political risk for the American president was too great to try merely to knock unwilling heads together. Washington was not prepared to elevate the intensity of its engagement to a level conducive to failure. Now the chances of failure are marginal at best because the respective sides want to see the process continue, even with such distractions as the issue of the Palestinian deportees. Negotiating sides believe that failure to reach compromises will worsen the status quo. All sides tacitly concur that delayed progress could strengthen regional opponents of any negotiations or recognition of Israel on the one hand, and desired territorial compromise by Israel on

the other. These factions in the Arab world include various Islamic fundamentalist groups, government policy in Iran, Iraq, and Libya, and vocal groups both affiliated and not with the PLO. In Israel, Mr. Rabin's government does not have a vast mandate from the Israeli general public to make unrestricted territorial compromises; it does have an opportunity to negotiate arrangements which the Israeli public considers within the realm of acceptable risks undertaken for the prospect of long-term peaceful relations with its Arab neighbors.

Eighth, the Clinton administration entered its transition period and first weeks in office with an on-going and diverse Middle East peace process. It was an unprecedented advantage for an American president. During 1992, outside pressure or leverage was not required to initiate talks between parties or to continue their mutual compromises. In going to Madrid, all sides understood there would be a two-tiered approach: an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians on the one hand, and between Israel and the Arab states on the other. That formula has been adhered to rather rigidly. Discussions are now at an advanced stage about the nature and timing of Palestinian elections to oversee Palestinian self-government in the territories and about how to synchronize the scope and timing of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights with a similar timetable for Syria's reciprocal implementation of an acceptable definition of peace. All sides agree that the key to progress in the Lebanese-Israeli talks is likely to come after a Syrian-Israeli arrangement is negotiated. Already, Jordan and Israel have agreed upon a draft negotiating agenda for further discussions. Even in the midst of the American presidential transition period, all sides continued to meet in Washington, completing the eighth round of bilateral talks in December 1992. Bilateral negotiations were held before and after Secretary of State Baker joined the Bush reelection campaign -- with and without the invisible American hand at the negotiating helm. Highly qualified and seasoned diplomats in the Department of State kept the process moving forward. For that, they are to be commended.

When he came to office last month, President Clinton was the beneficiary not only of peace negotiations between Israel and its contiguous Arab neighbors, but also of two sets of multilateral completed talks on five different issues (arms control, economics, environment, refugees, and water). The multilateral talks had been held in the presence of representatives from several dozen countries, including many Arab states not geographically contiguous to Israel, and with the participation of such international institutions as the World Bank and the United Nations. The international community has thereby become critically involved in the stewardship and commitment toward achieving successful outcomes in the negotiating process. European countries, Japan, and other Pacific Rim countries that benefit from oil and political stability in the region must be convinced to share the burden of Middle East peace-keeping, which will specifically require capital investment for regional economic development.

The United States and the Arab-Israeli Negotiating Process: What to do?

First, the negotiating dynamic has created reality and responsibility among the respective sides. Therefore, there is little need to adjust the style of our engagement in the negotiations. All negotiating sides (at recognizably different rates) became more pragmatic about their obligations as the negotiations flowed from Madrid. As the euphoria subsided, realistic goals replaced self-serving illusions and even softened deeply hewn ideologies. If progress in the bilateral talks were to be feasible, then it would have to be achieved by leaders making arduous decisions. The negotiating process has put the mantle of responsibility on the shoulders of every delegation. An agreement negotiated between the sides has the greatest chance of survival.

Second, Washington has avoided becoming a surrogate advocate for any side. Significantly, in the process which we catalyzed after the Gulf War and through Madrid, each side had to deal with the other and could not avoid direct negotiations by seeking to make Washington apply pressure unilaterally. Consistency in Washington's procedural association with the pre-Madrid negotiations and during the bilateral talks carried over into the presidential transition period: American participation would not become a substitute for direct negotiations. While Washington has shown disagreement with all sides at different times and over a variety of issues, it has -- in an exemplary fashion -- refused to use pressure or coercion on any side.

Third, while we have our own view on specific points in the negotiating process, Washington has not superimposed our convictions on the participants. Our position on United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 is a case in point. Every administration has asserted that this resolution is the framework for negotiations. Our interpretation is that the resolution implies an exchange of territory for peace and has application on all fronts. Yet, since the passage of the resolution in 1967, no administration has defined what the final borders should be in a negotiated settlement or what the time period should be for providing peace and exchanging territory. Appropriately, we have neither endorsed nor precluded that the final borders of Israel will be those which existed prior to the June 1967 War. In an almost doggedly determined and admirably consistent fashion, Washington has retained its active engagement in the negotiations but has had the respective sides make their choices and select their interpretations.

Fourth, while playing its central role in the negotiating process, Washington must continue to seek synchronized progress on the bilateral and multilateral tracks. Only Israel can provide territory, and only the Arab sides can provide security. Time is required for the respective sides to accept the notion that they must provide one of these variables to the other; likewise, each side must be satisfied that what it is receiving is both necessary and sufficient. We can neither overload Israeli risk-taking nor fail to provide for the political rights of the Palestinians in the geographic area of the

West Bank and Gaza which they can call their own. We cannot wait for a final inked agreement before undergirding the diplomatic process with economic assistance. The history of Arab-Israeli diplomacy has demonstrated that no Arab-Israeli agreements occur when Israel senses pressure from Washington or duress from the United Nations. Similarly, we must ensure incentives for Arab states and for the Palestinians along the peace-making and peace-keeping route.

Finally, the most enduring arrangement between Israel and its neighbors will be one that is electively concluded in conjunction with active American stewardship. Stewardship does not mean coercion. Any arrangement must be based upon trust and confidence between the negotiating sides and must not be predicated solely on American assurances or guarantees. To be effective, a peaceful relationship must ultimately establish a sense of security for the Israelis, a return of territory to the Arab sides, and at least a minimum degree of self-government among Palestinians. Every negotiated arrangement must indicate a demonstrable change in the region's atmosphere, revealing public acceptance of fears and mutual awareness of aspirations. These measured tones of understanding were absent in the public speeches heard in Madrid in 1991. But a year later, progress is evident in the more positive indications that Arabs and Israelis understand one another's apprehensions. Arabs and Israelis who have participated in the process even suggest optimism for the coming year in making further progress.^{ii [2]}

The United States and Continued Access to Middle Eastern Oil and Assistance to the Stability of Oil-Producing States

The end of the Gulf War did not end our dependence on Middle Eastern oil. It did not remove the deep anxiety held by Persian Gulf Arab oil-producing states about their security. Our need for oil from the Persian Gulf has not lessened nor has the fear diminished in the region nor in the international community for Iraq's future intentions. Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War did not change that regime's political behavior. Permit me to add that I do not believe that the Iraqi regime has changed its long-term goals of seeking to influence if not dominate countries and resources in his geographic proximity. I do not believe that opening a broad dialogue with the Iraqi regime will make Iraq publicly repentant or a trusted neighbor. Iraq believes that the action of the international community during and after the Gulf War has been motivated by an effort to curb Iraq's sovereign action. Iraq believes that the international community objects to its sovereignty. We do not object to Iraq's sovereignty; we object to its imposition on others. In circumscribing Iraq's political behavior, the international community is protesting against Iraqi policy which undermines and threatens regional stability and is perniciously injurious to the rights of individuals and ethnic groups under Iraq's control.

Regular engagement in curbing the Iraqi regime's political behavior must emanate from the financial and military support of countries in the region which are immediately threatened by Hussein's actions.

Adding to the consternation of these countries is the resurgent nature of Iran as it seeks to assert influence and perhaps supremacy in this extraordinarily important oil-rich region. Iran finds itself well positioned geographically to reinvigorate the spread of its message: political Islam can protect one's identity against the aggressive and nefarious intent of foreign and secular dominance. The Iranian regime is profoundly anti-Western, totally opposed to the Arab-Israeli negotiating process, and strongly determined to rid the Gulf of all traces of Western presence and influence.

Tehran seeks to become the dominant voice in the northern end of the Persian Gulf. Its resurgence was almost instantaneously coterminous with Iraq's defeat and subsequent enfeeblement and quarantine monitored by the international community. The physical placement of Western forces on the Arabian peninsula has provided Iran with constant and immediate notice of a neo-imperial presence. Iran is delighted that, so far, the Arab signatories of the March 1992 Damascus Declaration (Egypt, Syria, and the Gulf states) have failed to implement the defense of the Gulf. Not only does Iran scan the Gulf as a potential area for hegemonic or philosophical expansion, it sees the Moslem republics of the Soviet Union as a naturally contiguous zone of influence. The Muslim republics on Iran's border are extraordinarily fertile opportunities for Tehran. Specifically, late last year Iran accused Russian influence of perpetrating "Muslimocide" against the Muslim inhabitants in Tajikistan. Iran is assisting or encouraging the development of a joint Irano-Azerbaijan economic commission; in late October, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Tehran and reportedly discussed, among other issues, scientific, technological, and infrastructure development -- railways, roads, commercial ties, and other mutual interests as littoral states on the Caspian Sea. In early November 1992, the Energy Minister of Kyrgyzstan met with his Iranian equivalent to discuss bilateral oil cooperation. In late November, Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov visited Tehran to establish a basis for ties in regional cooperation. Creating and developing contacts and links to these areas enables Tehran to be seen as the defender of Islamic belief against non-Islamic political forces. Engendering an Islamic political vibrancy contiguous to itself proved too appetizing for Iran to resist. After carrying its message to sympathetic souls in Lebanon in the 1980s, Iran now possessed an unprecedented opportunity to sell its revolutionary zeal to five weak and disorganized ethnic communities in predominantly Muslim areas of the former U.S.S.R. With the support of other countries, Iran is also seeking the development and implications of its own nuclear capability. Additionally, Tehran was delighted with the success of the Mojaheddin in Afghanistan and the role Iran played in resolving Kabul's internal political turmoil. Experienced former Mojaheddin fighters can now be found in the Sudan, where they are training Egyptian Islamic militants who are helping to foment what can so far be described as minor insurrection against the Mubarak regime. According to Dr. Usamah al-Baz, the influential first under-secretary of Egypt's foreign

ministry, "The Iranian Government wants single-handedly to control the Arab countries in the Gulf region so it can impose its hegemony over them. It does not want any country outside the Gulf region to side with these countries in confronting the strategic threats and dangers to which they are being subjected."ⁱⁱⁱ [3]

The Iranian leadership sees this moment as a profitable chance to capture the dominant discontent in "the Middle Eastern street." The masses have had their expectations built but unfulfilled by the highly Westernized, monarchical, or secular regimes that have governed sometimes with a heavy hand since the end of World War II. Tehran, like the rest of the world, caught a glimpse of the massive and underlying discontent that was aroused in support of Saddam Hussein's boldness. By invading Kuwait and surviving, the Iraqi president misled his Arab brothers; he unleashed deep-seated popular anger against established ruling regimes, particularly those that are oil rich. Even if Iran does not capture the minds of the disenchanting middle and lower classes in the Arab world, it can at least foment political opposition to the status quo. Most sunni Arab regimes see Iran and its exportation of religious zeal as a danger, insidiously poised to undermine their rule. This is certainly the view held in Cairo, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, many of the Arab Gulf states, and among the PLO. Iran continues to use local Islamic-oriented groups who oppose policies of an existing establishment to advance Iran's own philosophical interests. Tehran has proven most adept at doing this with hizbollah in southern Lebanon and with hammas, the Palestinian organization which is suffused with pernicious Islamic tenets and which opposes any negotiation, recognition, or acceptance of Israel.

On December 8, 1992, Egyptian Defense Minister Muhammad Tantawi bluntly said, "Iran is the biggest threat to Egypt because of its anti-Egyptian policies and measures and the sabotage activities that undermine peace and security in the region. Iran continues to adopt a policy of exporting the extremist revolutionary ideology through various means and phased strategies."^{iv} [4] According to Tantawi, Egypt's methods in achieving this goal are undertaken by strengthening its military, developing conventional, nuclear, and chemical capabilities, obtaining surface-to-surface missiles, and deepening the differences within the PLO in order to sabotage the Arab-Israeli negotiating process. Equally outspoken is Yasir Arafat, who has repeatedly and openly over the last month accused Iran of interfering in the internal affairs of the PLO and undermining its leadership.^v [5]

Iran remains instinctively aggressive in opposition to most of our values, allies in the region, and to the Arab-Israeli negotiating process. There is no solution to Iran's desire to spread its message, other than to try removing some of the social and political inequalities that are otherwise appealing to those who favor anti-establishment and pro-Khomeyni-like Islamic political activity. Progress in the Arab-Israeli negotiating process that obtains something tangible for the Palestinians will not end Iranian militancy, but it will contribute to a sense that the process is worthwhile. Economic development can also reduce the appeal which Iran and other Islamic fundamentalist groups have in destabilizing more secular and Western-oriented political regimes.

In a recent visit to the Gulf, I was repeatedly told how pleased these countries are with their bilateral relation with the United States: the pre-positioning of American military equipment, the regular port-of-call visits, and the continued provision of other military assistance. These oil-producing states appreciate the sanctions, embargo, quarantine, and inspection role which the international community is applying to Iraq. But the containment of Iraq can last only as long as the countries of the area remain vigilant and active in their own defense.

The United States and the Promotion of Democratic Ideals

It is both morally appropriate and strategically important for United States foreign policy to be an advocate for human rights and the promotion of democratic ideals. Securing democratic values among Egyptians, Palestinians, and Jordanians, in tandem with Israel, insures greater prospects for long-term stability in the eastern Mediterranean. We must endorse increased participation of individuals in determining their own future. Over the last several decades, many Middle Easterners have been educated in western institutions of higher learning; they have returned to the Middle East with a greater sense of self and individual privilege. They are the propagators for greater inclusion of democratic ideals in the societies in which they live. They will decide the pace and depth their social orders can accept democratic values. We must be advocates for individual freedoms, but not lobbyists for style of governance over another. It is not up to the United States to be prescriptive about how to define or how to implement Palestinian political rights. It is not up to the United States to propagate methodology for Israel's self-generated interest in adopting more democratic forms of domestic political expression or in revamping its economic system. It is not up to the United States to influence Jordan in suggesting how its newly developed political party structures should be refined in their pioneering experiment with democracy. The United States does not need to create an official alliance system with states in the region that advocate and pursue democratic ideals, but we must be prepared to assist such countries along the lines advocated by Mr. Christopher in his confirmation hearings, "We must ...improve our institutional capacity to provide timely and effective aid to people struggling to establish democracy and free markets."

If we want to have any influence in reducing Islam's power and authority as a platform for political mobilization which threaten the political stability of several states in the region, we must continue our level of economic assistance to countries such as Egypt. We must immediately provide or obtain financial support for Jordan and, at an appropriate moment in the negotiating process, also offer economic incentives for Lebanon and Syria. Disparities of income among Arabs and between Arabs and Israelis need to be addressed. Poverty, destitution, and hopelessness feed Islamic fundamentalism. In the Arab world, the primary obligation in raising the socioeconomic standards of living rests with those Arab states that have sufficient wealth to assist their brethren.

Conclusions

Mr. Chairman, the old world order is gone. In the Middle East, changes are developing along a path on which our moral and strategic interests in the region can be preserved and enhanced. In the multilateral talks that accompany the Arab-Israeli peace process, there is a real opportunity to help the region strengthen itself by shaping and defining issues of economic development, water usage, and curbing the proliferation of weapons. Success in the multilateral talks must come before final agreements are reached on the bilateral tracks. Success in the multilateral talks can demonstrate to skeptics that the negotiating process benefits them -- but not in lieu of political progress. There must be a gradual but consistent removal of the Arab boycott against Israel, which, according to Israel's foreign minister, the boycott causes Israel to lose from \$2-\$3 billion a year in income.^{vi [6]}

In my view, there is a real chance for this administration and this Congress to promote our long-term objectives in the Middle East: sustaining our relationship with Israel, nurturing the Arab-Israeli negotiating process, expanding and developing positive relations with Arab countries that support Israel (such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria), maintaining mutually beneficial relations with Arab oil-producing states in the Persian Gulf, containing Iraqi belligerence, remaining vigilant about Iran's activities, and promoting democratic ideals. Failure to promote these objectives, or failure to remain engaged in the region as a pillar of support and guidance, will hasten the coagulation of the region's vast indigenous problems into a debilitating mix that fosters extremism, radicalism, and insidious varieties of Islamic fundamentalism. To assure access to Middle Eastern oil, we need to nurture our bilateral relations with Arab states while maintaining our interest in the Middle East and our strong support for Israeli security. Countries of the region need military equipment for self-defense, but not the extravagant continuation of arms sales. We should promote democratic ideals by giving advisory

guidance, but not by being imperious. As we have learned in our relationship with Egypt, it is possible and advantageous to American national and strategic interests to be supportive of Israel and of Arab states.

We cannot hope to be the policeman of the Middle East. Direct assistance, cooperation, and support of countries in the region are necessary for regional economic and political stability. We can continue to build upon our successes, and now in the absence of a Cold War in the Middle East, we can do so in a less inhibited fashion. We have the luxury to shape and implement a foreign policy that protects and enhances our strategic and moral interests.

Anyone who follows the Middle East knows that it is not a static place. It is full of surprises even for those of us who claim to understand it. In shaping our foreign policy for the coming years of this century, we must be prepared to face new and difficult realities as we sustain previous commitments. We must be prepared in this decade for possible regime changes in many countries. We must understand that the Middle East is a region of vast variety where the pace of the 20th century and space age technology have overwhelmed traditional values.

There are two distinct fears among many Middle Eastern Arabs today about American actions at the end of the Cold War: either the United States will be imperious, arrogant, or demanding because no one is there to check our power; or alternatively, we shall become isolationist and withdraw into a domestic cocoon that forsakes any external commitments whatsoever. It would be a waste of an opportunity for our foreign policy to do either at this juncture because we can be so influential in defining the region's immediate future and build on the same virtues and interests which caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

NOTES:

Dr. Kenneth W. Stein is an Associate Professor of Near Eastern History and Political Science at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. These remarks are culled from a combination of his recent scholarly publications, numerous visits to the region, and current academic research. In 1991, with Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis, he wrote Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis: Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience. His February 1993, he published in Politique Etrangere, "The Clinton Administration and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process: Apprehensions, Realities, and Prospects." To the contents of these publications, he has added his impressions from four trips to the Middle East in the last ten months, which have taken him on several occasions to Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Qatar. Finally, the monograph he is writing on the history of Arab-Israeli diplomacy has provided important historical perspective to an understanding and assessment of the region and its future directions.

[1] . Bernard Lewis, "Islam and Liberal Democracy," The Atlantic, (February 1993), vol. 271, no. 2, p. 98.

[2] . As recently as December 14, 1992, Syria President Assad said that he felt progress had been made, "What is new in their [Israeli] proposal (to consider withdrawal) and **what is new** that signals, is that they are serious about achieving peace." Remarks by Syrian President Assad before the Syrian General Federation of Trade Unions, December 14, 1992, as quoted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service- Near East and South Asia (hereafter noted as FBIS-NESA), December 16, 1992, p. 46. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa noted in late December said that "the negotiation process, if we exclude the new circumstances of the Palestinian deportation -- which is a serious and unacceptable issue -- has become more active, and better than before, giving us some reasons for optimism." Remarks by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, December 27, 1992, Uktubar magazine, as quoted in FBIS-NESA, December 28, 1992, p. 17. According to Lebanese Prime Minister, Faris Buwayz's remarks in early December, "If we examine the general results pertaining to all the delegations, we would find that there were some positive ideas, which, I can say, moved the conference from the stage of discussing the legitimate UN resolutions to what I call advanced principles which, of course, need to be programmed and which require more negotiators, clarification, and scrutiny." Remarks by Lebanese Foreign Minister, Faris Buwayz, Al-Hawadith, December 4, 1992, as quoted in FBIS-NESA, December 4, 1992, p. 45. For similar examples of Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli positive statements about the pace and content of the negotiating process, see remarks by Jordanian Foreign Minister Kamal Abu-Jaber, that the peace process is about where it should be, note his remarks on Amman Radio on December 5, 1992, as quoted in FBIS-NESA, December 7, 1992, p. 39; remarks by leading Palestinian political figure, Faysal Husayni, "I disagree with those who say nothing has happened [in the negotiations], Al-Anwar (Beirut), December 4, 1992; and remarks by Itamar Rabinovich, the head of the Israeli delegation to the Israeli-Syrian talks, about the changes in Syria's tone in negotiations in Yediot Aharonot, December 4, 1992.

[3] . Remarks by Dr. Usamah al-Baz, Middle East News Agency, November 30, 1992, as quoted in FBIS-NESA, November 30, 1992, p. 16.

[4] . Remarks by Egyptian Defense Minister Muhammad Husayn Tantawi at a Cairo seminar on Egypt's national security in 1990 organized at Cairo University, December 7, 1992, as quoted in FBIS-NESA, December 9, 1992.

[5] . Remarks by Yasir Arafat, "I accuse Iran of interfering in the Palestinian people's affairs. It is funding and training personnel from both the leftist and Islamic organizations at the same time, such as Hammas [Islamic Resistance Movement], the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The latest amount paid to these organizations was \$30 million to be used to strike at the stability and unity of the Palestinian factions." Text from Cairo AL-WAFD in Arabic, December 19, 1992, p. 6, as quoted in FBIS-NESA, December 22, 1992, p. 5.

[6] . Remarks by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, November 16, 1992, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel.