

POLICE A ROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD

The attacks of September 11 and the aggressive dictatorships of the Middle East affirm that the world is a dangerous place. The forces opposed to our country and its interests did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. Many of them reside in the Middle East. We cannot hide from the hatreds that fester in this region. Americans must accept that our country's strength and influence in the region and around the world present an irresistible target for hate-mongers and extremists.

To ensure our own security and that of our friends and allies, the United States must draw a clear line in the sand. On one side belong our trusted friends and allies in the region. Fortunately, there are many. Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and most of the Persian Gulf states have been reliable partners for decades. When their security is threatened, either by enemies beyond their borders or within, we should stand beside them. On the other side are the forces that have aligned themselves against peace and stability. They must be confronted before they unleash more havoc on their neighbors and on us.

We have destroyed the government of the most dangerous and aggressive tyrant in the region, Saddam Hussein. We must remain in Iraq until a new government can be established that is friendly toward the United States. There are also other countries such as Iran and Syria that sponsor terrorism and are trying to acquire dangerous weapons. Terrorists have demonstrated their ability to strike worldwide. Still more chilling is the prospect that a rogue state such as Iran may eventually be armed with nuclear weapons. Only the United States has the power and the prestige to confront the outlaw regimes of the Middle East. The job of police officer is not fun, but in a neighborhood as rough as the Middle East the alternative is chaos and war.

What policies should we pursue?

- We should maintain strong alliances with our key friends in the Middle East and provide foreign aid and military assistance to Middle Eastern governments that are fighting against Islamist movements.
- We should work for a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict that ensures the security of Israel while satisfying our Arab allies. We should persuade the Palestinians and Israelis to give ground on issues that are stumbling blocks to a comprehensive peace agreement.
- We and our coalition allies should remain in Iraq until a government friendly to the United States can be established.
- We should use our economic, diplomatic, and military strength to prevent states in the region from developing nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons or from gaining access to advanced military technology.
- We should restrict the fund-raising and organizational activities of groups in the United States that are linked to Islamist movements in the Middle East.
- We should press our allies and trading partners worldwide to join us in imposing sanctions on Iran and controlling the flow of funds to terrorists.

Today's world runs on oil. Much of our industrialized society has been built around it. Without oil, the engines of the global economy would grind to a halt. The Middle East contains over 60 percent of the world's proven oil reserves. Saudi Arabia alone holds one-quarter of the planet's supplies. As Americans, we have no choice but to recognize the critical importance of Middle Eastern oil to economic and political stability. As the events of the 1970s illustrated, a disruption in Middle Eastern oil supplies has the potential to send shock waves throughout the global economy. Not only would Americans be jolted, but the economic earthquake would strike our key allies and trading partners in Western Europe and East Asia with even more devastating force. The entire international economy could very well crumble. In the face of such a threat, it should be clear that the flow of oil from the Middle East is vital to our country's prosperity and security. No other issue in the Middle East rivals the importance of energy.

U.S. policy in the Middle East must be focused on ensuring that our country and our allies have access to the region's oil resources. With so much at stake, we cannot afford to lose track of our priorities. For too long, America's absolute support of Israel has complicated our relationship with leading Arab oil-producers. Economic common sense demands that we take a more balanced approach. Likewise, there is no benefit in picking fights with Iran or Syria or carrying out a campaign against Islamist movements that needlessly alarms our allies. U.S. interests require that we maintain a military presence in the Persian Gulf, but we should be there to promote stability, not to provoke another war. Above all, we must be careful not to rock the boat in a region that is both dangerously explosive and critically important.

What policies should we pursue?

- We should scale back our support for Israel and take an evenhanded approach to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- We should continue to use our economic and diplomatic leverage to prevent OPEC from again dominating the world oil market.
- We should commit the resources necessary to get Iraqi oil flowing again and establish the mechanisms to ensure that this oil will be available to the us, our allies, and the global marketplace.
- We should maintain a military presence in the Persian Gulf sufficient to safeguard shipping lanes and to deter attacks against the main oil fields of the region.
- We should maintain friendly relations with Middle Eastern governments that respect U.S. oil interests and offer our country's assistance in resolving disputes that threaten regional stability.
- We should respond quickly and firmly, using force if necessary, against countries that threaten American oil interests in the Middle East.
- We should support the efforts of American oil companies doing business in the Middle East.
- We should end economic sanctions against Iran and instead work to draw it back into the international community.

Over the past decade, the world has changed. More countries than ever have embraced democracy and economic freedom. International standards of human rights have gained widespread acceptance. State-run economic systems have given way to free markets. Troubles, however, continue to emanate from the Middle East. In the Arab world, democracy has made scant headway. Basic freedoms and the rule of law count for little. The rights of women are cruelly neglected. Government officials keep a tight grip over industry and commerce. No region of the world spends a higher proportion of its wealth on weapons. Regrettably, U.S. policy has contributed to the Middle East's lack of progress. For too many years, we have put our oil interests and security concerns ahead of principle. We have looked the other way as heavy-handed rulers have abused their own people. As our experience first with the shah of Iran and then with Saddam Hussein proved, such policies inevitably come back to haunt us.

The time has come for the United States to use its enormous influence in the Middle East to nudge the region toward reform. In countries whose regimes are both brutal and tyrannical, such as Iran and Syria, the United States should work to foster democratic opposition forces for a change in government. In others, the United States should encourage positive change. Governments that take steps toward establishing democratic institutions, open societies, and economic freedoms should be rewarded, while favors should be withheld from those that refuse to budge. Fortunately, there are a few states that serve as models for the region. Israel has a solid record of democracy. Turkey's political system has overcome several setbacks. Jordan and Lebanon also appear to be moving toward greater political participation. No country, however, should be above criticism. For the United States to bring reform to the Middle East, our policies must be seen as fair and evenhanded by those in the region and by the wider international community. Change is possible, but only if our country is willing to commit its strength and its resources to this endeavor.

What policies should we pursue?

- We should use foreign aid, trade benefits, and diplomatic pressure to promote democratic, free-market reform in the Middle East.
- We should ensure the survival of Israel and persuade Arab states to establish peaceful relations with Israel. At the same time, we should pressure Israel to end human rights abuses against the Palestinians living under Israeli jurisdiction.
- We should base our support for Palestinian statehood on the progress of the Palestinian Authority in promoting democracy and human rights.
- We should restrict arms sales to governments that use force against their own people.
- We should punish governments that abuse the rights of minority groups, violate the principles of religious tolerance, or discriminate against women. This must apply evenly to our allies and our enemies in the region.
- We should work to foster domestic democratic opponents of the Iran mullahs and other brutal, tyrannical rulers in the Middle East.
- We should reduce our military ties with governments that refuse to take steps toward establishing democratic institutions and economic freedoms.
- Now that we are there, we should stay in Iraq and build a democracy there.

BREAK FREE OF ENTANGLEMENTS

Since the end of the Cold War, much of our country's foreign policy attention has shifted to the Middle East. We have fought two wars against Iraq, occupied that country, and established an extensive military presence in the region. In addition, we have committed vast diplomatic and security resources to resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. And what have we gotten for our efforts? Only increasing anti-American sentiment stirred up by Islamist militants. We have become the target of terrorist attacks aimed at punishing us for our involvement in the Islamic world. History has shown that U.S. policymakers have often misunderstood developments in the Middle East. As September 11 demonstrated, U.S. involvement in the region can be a costly, dangerous adventure.

The United States must break free of our country's entanglements in the Middle East. The military presence that we have built up in recent years must be eliminated if we are to avoid finding ourselves caught up in another, potentially far more deadly and expansive war. We can not allow our country to continue to serve as a convenient target for anti-American extremists. Likewise, we should not be held responsible for guaranteeing peace between Arabs and Israelis. Ultimately, disputes in the region must be resolved by those involved, not by American diplomats or American military forces. U.S. relations with the countries of the Middle East should be limited to issues that do not entangle us in the controversies of the region. Like the nations of Western Europe and Japan, we should concentrate on doing business with the Middle East, not on meddling in local affairs. By keeping our distance, we would remove ourselves from the sights of Islamist extremists and avoid further terrorist attacks.

What policies should we pursue?

- We should turn responsibility for rebuilding Iraq over to the United Nations.
- We should withdraw our military forces from the Middle East and end our alliances with countries in the region.
- We should scale back our involvement in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and instead advise the countries of the region to take the initiative in pursuing the peace process.
- We should pursue open trade and business relations with all of the countries of the Middle East.
- We should repeal our economic sanctions against Iran and Libya.
- We should reduce our dependence on Middle Eastern oil by encouraging American oil companies to invest elsewhere in the world and by promoting the development of alternative energy sources, such as solar power.
- We should limit foreign aid in the Middle East to humanitarian crises.