

A Time and Plan for Revisiting Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian Question

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A half-century of unresolved tension in the Middle East, the current conflict in Iraq, and Tony Blair's wise counsel that we must embrace them all in any bid for permanent peace in the region, invite these comments.

Over thirty-six years ago, while serving as President Nixon's Ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and at the encouragement of David Lilienthal (first Chair of Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Atomic Energy Commission), I urged consideration of a giant multi-national TVA-like development of the Middle East. It would harness the water and power of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, head-watering in Turkey and sweeping to the sea through that whole region. It would enlist the scientific know-how of Israel, the oil largess of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the people power of the region, and the financial and humanitarian concern of the rest of the world.

As cradle of the three western religious traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it could draw on the universal moral affirmations of those traditions at their best. Jerusalem could be made an international trusteeship, providing a home and inspiration to all three religious traditions, and a beacon of moral light provided by the best prophetic tradition of all three.

The economic and human development of the region, spurred by the recycling resources of hydroelectric power and water resources of the two great river systems, could insure that "the desert would blossom like a rose." A newly devised "Marshall Plan" calling on shared resources of the developed world, would ensure infusion of capital, partners in development, and a global stake in the welfare of so critical a region.

Unhappily, our ever-deepening involvement in Vietnam drained domestic interests in that direction, and the nuclear face of our ever-threatening MAD (mutually assured destruction!) policy with the Soviets paralyzed action, and the efforts died a-borning. My energy turned to the persuasion of U Thant, then

Secretary General of the U.N. and former teacher, to propose a United Nations University, the missing link in the whole United Nations system. My energies were devoted to that task until I left the U.N. to head Kent State University after the tragic National Guard shooting of students there, in the final violent protests against the war in Vietnam.

In all the tragic conflict in the Middle East, Israel's defiant rejection of U.N. resolution after resolution to return the land taken in the wars to the Palestinian people, no one has picked up on this comprehensive proposal for that entire region. Increasingly, polarization of world support for our role in the region has eroded, and our failure to secure a second U.N. Resolution regarding Hussein and Iraq has but added to this tinderbox.

It appears that now, from a solid voice from our President, through Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld, and Secretary Powell, we are committed to the single policy of defeat of Hussein and the presumptive peril of his weapons of mass destruction, and we are not there for purposes of economic exploitation of their oil, or any other imperialistic design. We can be reassured that this policy is a more solid base for the action we have taken than any other. It seems clear that it is pledged to a strengthened support for the U.N. in the region, and post war support. Intrinsic to that support is a clear-minded affirmation of several principles and objectives on which a troubled world can count.

The "war on terror," as our President has insisted, is global. There is no hiding place for its perpetrators, and the world must be vigilant and united in seeking them out and arresting their power.

Vacillation and lack of resolve in pursuing that commitment tempts rogue leaders and regimes to interpret this as weakness and vulnerability, as seems to have been the case with Iraq over the past dozen years. Failure of the Security Council of the U.N. to come to closure and support of a second resolution after clear denial, evasion, and delay only reinforced the U.N.'s weakness, not its strength, as the world's arm was designed in its founding to "keep the peace!" We must now be absolutely consistent in our claim as to our sole intention.

We need to acknowledge publicly and as national policy what Tony Blair is advocating: that the war in Iraq is but a piece (peace!) of the larger festering Middle East. Now is the time to hold Israel to past account, assure establishment of a Palestinian State, reconstruct the original boundaries, rescind Israeli housing and conquest on land taken by conquest, and insure in return from the Palestinians and surrounding Arab world the integrity, independence, and viability of the State of Israel.

Advocate and take the initiative in a renewed effort and pledge to support a comprehensive, transnational plan for the redevelopment of the region, one to match the Marshall Plan in its historic role in the reconstruction of Europe and Japan after World War II. Elements of this strategy, now hoary with age, gather dust in my file. We have learned much in the last fifty years about AID (Agency for

International Development), efforts at self-help, and the intrinsic integrity of a people to find and fashion their own form of development and help. Yet, the components of such planning have been clarified and hold rather consistently. It entails, minimally:

- comprehensive participation of all segments of Iraqi society in its conceptual design and inclusive provisions;
- selection of leadership that mirrors the intent of the plan that is comprehensive, inclusive, representational, competent, and accountable, which includes gender, age, sectorial competence, team building and democratic participation, process, and self-connecting and on-going renewal. It will be particularly sensitive to what we have learned in the reconstruction of Europe, of the enduring roots of earlier and anti-democratic interests and appetite for power and not the welfare of the people;
- public visibility, form, and content of the emerging plan to permit and encourage criticism, refinement, understanding, and support. Like picking grapes, one must seize the stem on which they cluster, and discern the difference between stem and solitary grapes. A plan is not a bowl of individual grapes, but a cluster around a central stem that holds them together. Articulation of such organizing "stems" is the sophistication of significant planning, and moves a mob of people into an organized, articulate community of helpers;
- think tanks, and planning commissions of nearly every country and culture could be enlisted and entrusted to generate a range of thoughtful options for democratic and political action. Such resources from business and industry, which lack the luxury of endless debate and delay, and others associated with the intellectual and professional communities could be enlisted as well. The incentive is comprehensive and compelling: to literally "help save the world!";
- enlist the unfettered wisdom of those creative individuals already identified by historic recognition. Nobel Peace Prize Winners, Rhodes Scholars, Carnegie, Wilson, and other designers from other nations and cultures could be commissioned to contribute their ideas for such an unfolding program. Indeed, some might volunteer to provide an on-going "think tank" with technological and practical help for "reconstruction." One might even persuade a Bill Gates or a Ted Turner or a Warren Beatty to finance and sustain such an effort;
- call for a Charter Revision Council to consider revision of the U.N. Charter after fifty years, and its accord with present historic realities. The ineffectiveness of the U.N. to achieve consensus regarding our current critics illustrates the limitations of the non-democratic veto and the currently comprised Security Council to "keep the peace." There are several creative ideas, long proposed, awaiting serious discussion:
 - modification or abandonment of the undemocratic veto process;
 - reconstruction of the Security Council reflecting more responsibly: population, GNP, and contribution to the U.N.'s budget and progress;
 - insuring that U.N. Security Council mandates are legislative, not merely permissive, and obligation to put one's commitment behind one's words;
 - addressing afresh major features of the U.N.'s Economic and Social Council along several lines:

- integrate horizontally as well as vertically the specialized Agencies, so that their principles and policies can permeate and not duplicate in redundancy the collective strategies of our world;
- link the innovative features of the U.N. University and the U.N.'s University for Peace to the appropriate University professional organizations around the world;
- invite people such as Bill Gates, Ted Turner, and Carly Fiorina, the brilliant woman Chairman and CEO of Hewlett Packard, to devise materials - universal, inexpensive, easy of access, comprehensive, sanitized of national biases - and to readily prepare not only a language but shared values and culture world-wide;
- consider a new form of international exchange, building on human and economic resources, in which no nation is impoverished, and free the grip our current currency and monetary exchange has on the flow of *goods* and *services* around the world.
- revisit the "War on Terror" to identify fact from fiction, legitimate and illegitimate forces agitating for needed and long-delayed reform in our world, and address and reduce the roots of terror in unmet hunger of masses of humanity for food, freedom, and a trustworthy and human future;
- enlist the moral commitment of communities of faith, mentioned earlier, Hebraic, Christian, Islamic, and Eastern in strategies and resources for peace in the Higher Vision of humanity, reinforcing the conscience of the world with cosmic support;
- following the above, appeal to our President's Christian faith, strongly supported by our first lady, in reinforcing a religious intention and interest for the tortured battleground of the Middle East, and calling on the "voluntary" side of our society to join in a massive response to the world's need. A call for "Prophetic Renewal," appealing to the moral high ground of all religious traditions, can be made by our President, the most public and visible President in his expression of religious faith that we have had in a long time. I suspect Colin Powell has deep convictions in this area, which he has not expressed;
- clarify the issue of "separation of church and state" by making it clear that our founding fathers did not intend thereby to ignore or reject religion or its deliverance of conscience from national affairs. It was their clear intention to insure that the peoples of this nation would never permit their experience in Europe and other nations of the world in having a religious preference and relationship dominate the political and practical affairs of state. Their experience as protestants and nonconformists, and even the Catholics in the Carolinas, with religious persecution for their minority views, would not permit this in their new commonwealth. They did not abdicate conscience, or exclude religious faith, or practice from their common life, but rather insisted this private domain of conscience and its free exercise would never be permitted to be invaded or dominated by affairs of state. They even made provision for the "conscientious objection" of those who could not take up arms;
- pledge a percentage of our national income, as in the Marshall Plan days, for this reconstruction and support. Call on the Senate bi-partisan Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by liberal-minded internationalist Richard Lugar, to aid the President in formulation and principles to guide our "War on Terror" and consummation of the War in Iraq;

- reaffirm our intention to sustain a reformed U.N. after the initial intention of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill's Atlantic Charter and its Four Freedoms, which was watered down and compromised to secure Stalin and the Soviet Unions' tentative support at Yalta. Call for such a revision study, with a set date for reporting and a pledge in advance to take seriously its reform recommendations, assuring that our people and Congress have full benefit of public discussion and recommendation.

These modest suggestions may deal with but the tip of the iceberg, or more appropriately, the continental drift that has taken place since 1945, and is still taking place, but they would address many of the suspicions and much of the anxiety of our troubled world about our awesome power and national commitment to the Fate of Freedom in our troubled world. They would rekindle memories of most of the world of our willingness to send our bravest and best anywhere in the world to rescue liberty from tyranny, as we had done in WWII, Korea, Bosnia, and now Iraq. Such moves may seem bold, but they are modest compared to efforts made in the past to vindicate our nation. As the inscription on the Statue of Liberty proclaims: "Send your tired and your poor⁸⁵ longing to be free." Lady Liberty holds a torch we should never let smolder or die. She is more than a beacon of welcome. She lights our own nation and people as well with hope and promise!