

THE PERSIAN GULF'S COLLECTIVE-SECURITY MIRAGE

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A drawdown of American forces in Iraq is in the wind. And many observers are giving thought to what the shape of Persian Gulf security could or should be as the Iraqis prepare to take over the burden of defending themselves. In Washington circles, many observers are calling for a “new security architecture” or “collective security” in the Gulf. They argue that a collective arrangement would make for more stability than the balance of power that has dominated the Gulf’s strategic landscape since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Most proposals, however, apply the term “collective security” to a grab bag of loosely defined security-related activities, which, taken as a whole, do not constitute an escape from balance-of-power politics. A real collective-security institution in the Gulf, moreover, would simply be unworkable given the host of competing security interests of nation-states in the Gulf and those on the periphery that would want a say in the region. The harsh reality of Gulf security — past, present and future — remains balance-of- power politics. Wash-

ington needs to squarely face this reality to fashion a regional-security policy that preserves American interests as the new Iraq takes shape and Iran challenges the region with its suspected nuclear-weapons aspirations.

THE MIRAGE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

The terms “new security architecture” and “collective security” go hand in hand and are conceptualizations routinely bandied about in debates and policy recommendations for Gulf security. Many observers see the end of the Cold War coupled with the more recent ouster of Saddam Hussein’s regime as an opening for an entirely new security environment in the Persian Gulf. The common view of these analyses is that the Gulf has been pitted with international conflict — the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War as well as in the 1990-91 and 2003 Iraq wars — because of the balance-of-power politics that have shaped the region. Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia each maneuvered for power and a dominant position in the Gulf while manipulating smaller Arab Gulf states and the

outside balancing power of the United States. The incidents of war in the region have led many observers to call for an alternate framework to establish and nurture for the next several decades, one that would be more conducive to peace than the balance-of-power competition.

A new Gulf security architecture is at times defined as informal security cooperation while at other times as a formal institution composed of nation-states. In both usages, a principal aim is to induce Iran to break away from its decades-old isolation from security discussions with its Gulf neighbors. James Russell, for example, suggests that “the time may be ripe to make an attempt to integrate Iran into regional security arrangements to promote transparency and build trust.”¹ Joseph McMillan, Richard Sokolsky and Andrew Winner argue that “the region needs regularized multilateral connections on security and related issues that encompass all the key players in the region, namely, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. If a formal institution should eventually be deemed necessary by the states of the region and grow out of habits and patterns of cooperation, then so be it, but that should not be a short-term or even a medium-term goal.”²

In canvassing the Gulf security environment, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is the lone regional security institution onto which more formal and ambitious security responsibilities might be grafted and nurtured. Russell argues that the fall of Saddam’s regime “provides the United States and its GCC partners with an opportunity to breathe new life into the concept of collective security and regional military integration.”³ Indeed, the GCC is the closest thing that the Gulf now has to a collective-security organization. In early

2000, the GCC members — Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf states minus Yemen — signed a “joint defense pact.” Although the details of the pact have not been publicly released, Russell reports that the GCC members pledged to increase the existing GCC Peninsula Shield Force from 5,000 to 25,000 and develop a shared early-warning system, and that the pact’s language states that “an attack on one member is an attack on all GCC states.”⁴ Some observers think that the GCC could even expand its membership to broaden its geographic swath of collective-security responsibilities. Kenneth Pollack, for example, has raised the idea of the United States “establish[ing] a formal defense alliance with the GCC states and a new government in Iraq.”⁵

Security-architecture and collective-security advocates argue that transparency measures such as military-to-military exchanges and arms control could be used as “baby steps” to more formal security institutions similar to those used in Europe during the Cold War. Pollack has detailed the idea of a “security condominium” which

would begin by establishing a regional-security forum at which relevant issues could be debated and discussed, information exchanged, and agreements framed. The members could then move on to confidence-building measures, such as notification of exercises, exchanges of observers, and information swaps. Ultimately, the intention would be to proceed to eventual arms-control agreements that might include demilitarized zones, bans on destabilizing weapons systems, and balanced force reductions for all parties. In particular, the group might aim for a ban on all WMD, complete with

penalties for violators and a multilateral (or international) inspection program to enforce compliance.

Ray Takeyh and Steven Cook similarly recommend a graduated approach to building a new security network in the Persian Gulf that “could evolve gradually, beginning with confidence-building measures and arms-control compacts and, eventually, lead to a full security system that resembles institutions such as the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe [OSCE].”⁶

However, security models based on Europe’s experience do not match the political-military realities in the Persian Gulf today and for the foreseeable future. Many view the GCC as a NATO-like institution in the Gulf. But for all of the rhetoric surrounding NATO as “the most successful alliance in history,” its role and mission are in tatters. NATO’s ever-increasing membership, for example, is stretching to the extreme the credibility of the Article 5 security guarantee, whereby all NATO members agree to come to the defense of another member under attack. The United States recently extended a security commitment via NATO to the defense of the new members of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania and Bulgaria. Although the expanded NATO membership has been accompanied by much political fanfare, few are willing to ask the tough strategic questions: What intrinsic national interests does the United States share with these new and small NATO members? How willing or eager will some future American president be to risk war with Russia over Lithuania? What does the United States get in return for its defense backing from these new members?

An example of the increasing lack of credibility of NATO’s Article 5 guarantee more directly related to Gulf security was NATO’s inability to invoke it at Turkey’s request in the run-up to the 2003 war against Iraq. The Turks asked for NATO help to defend against possible Iraqi retaliatory operations, but the Alliance declined. In short, the European security landscape begins to look like a social-welfare program in which the United States doles out security pledges through NATO. The United States has probably overpledged in Europe and ought to avoid doing more of the same in the Persian Gulf.

Security arrangements modeled after the OSCE also would not have much practical traction in the Persian Gulf. Scholars and observers of a liberal international-relations bent are fond of reflecting on the influence of the OSCE and the Helsinki process for achieving the transition from Cold War to post-Cold War peace in Europe. These analyses, however, confuse cause and effect. Arms-control agreements, transparency arrangements and monitoring exchanges in and of themselves did not bring about the transition. The balance of power in Europe contained the Soviet Union from expansion and bought the West time for the internal inconsistencies of the Soviet Union to accumulate and cause it to collapse, much as George Kennan predicted in his famous 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article. The real acceleration of the European security transformation came with the arrival of enlightened statesmanship in Moscow in the form of Mikhail Gorbachev. He had the political courage to reverse the long-ingrained Soviet threat perception of the West nurtured by Lenin and his successors. After Gorbachev, the political walls came

tumbling down, allowing for the blossoming of OSCE endeavors and reductions in conventional forces and nuclear weapons.

An analogous political transformation in the Persian Gulf has yet to occur, and even the long-term prospects are not bright. Iran's newly elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a conservative hardliner who has appointed like-minded individuals to fill his foreign, intelligence and interior ministries. Ahmadinejad seems all but certain to continue, if not increase, Iran's use of militant ideological antipathy toward the United States to justify its power at home and distract the populace from formidable domestic problems: nearly 60 percent of Iranian citizens under the age of 24 face insufficient jobs, low economic growth, poor educational opportunities, and few political and social freedoms.⁷ Major social upheavals that culminated in the casting aside of conservative clerics or lessened the power, if not the position, of the unelected supreme leader might deliver a more moderate government in Tehran, but such a scenario seems unlikely anytime soon. Until such a transformation takes place in Tehran, the international efforts in the Gulf for transparency, arms control or security dialogue and negotiation envisioned by the proponents of a new security architecture and collective security would be more show than substance.

Proposals calling for collective security in the Gulf fall far short of the requirements for a real escape from the balance-of-power politics articulated by theorists. The core idea of a collective-security organization, envisioned by Woodrow Wilson at the founding of the League of Nations, was the notion of "one for all and all for one," which would commit all member states to counter with political,

military and economic means any aggressor state that violated the international status quo by attacking another member state. Collective-security enthusiasts, as Inis Claude has insightfully detailed, argued that the collective-security organization would offer a far superior deterrent than balance of power. Potential aggressor states would be deterred from attacking a member state because of the preponderance of power that would be marshaled against them in response.⁸

A real collective-security institution in the Persian Gulf would be nothing more than a mirage. While the GCC may pay lip service to the "one for all, and all for one" notion, in a regional contingency it would be every man for himself. The GCC has been incapable of wide or deep security cooperation in peacetime, much less in wartime. The GCC was an ineffectual entity in both the 1990 and 2003 Iraq wars, in which member states largely worked bilaterally to secure security arrangements with the United States.

A real collective-security organization that some argue could evolve from OSCE-type security cooperation efforts would require that all member states come to the defense of a threatened member and retaliate against the belligerent. That requirement is simple in theory, but nearly impossible in practice. As Michael Yaffe rightly judges, "The Middle East is an area marked more by its diversities than its commonalities. It has numerous interstate rivalries limited to distinct locales, lacks many cultural commonalities and comprises states with greatly varying threat perceptions and interests."⁹

The GCC conceivably could evolve into a regional collective-security organization with the inclusion of Iraq and Iran as

members. But one's imagination would be hard-pressed to envision a contingency in which Saudi Arabia or the small Arab Gulf states would welcome Iranian military intervention to re-establish the status quo. Likewise, it would be hard to imagine Tehran welcoming the intervention of an Arab Gulf state to bolster Iranian security. In the final analysis, the roots of Arab-Persian competition for power in the Gulf run deeper than any diplomatic commitment to collective security.

On top of these practical problems, a real collective-security institution in the Persian Gulf would also be difficult to limit geographically. The small Arab Gulf states might want the United States as a member to keep a check on Saudi, Iraqi and Iranian power. But if the United States were included as an outside power, Iran might insist that China and Russia also be brought in. Saudi Arabia might even insist that Pakistan be included to counterbalance both Iranian and American power. Meanwhile, India might use its diplomatic ties with the small Arab Gulf states to haggle for its inclusion as a means of ensuring that Islamabad would not jeopardize New Delhi's geopolitical interests. In the end, the institution would have such a broad array of members with competing security agendas and interests that paralysis would ensue.

FINDING BALANCE-OF-POWER REALITIES

Few today argue for a return to balance of power in the Gulf; it is not intellectually in vogue, and many see it as the root cause of past Gulf wars. It is more politic to look for alternative methods of maintaining stability. Such an emotional and intellectual appeal was once shared by Woodrow Wilson in his aspirations for the

League of Nations and a collective-security organization for Europe in the wake of World War I. But the notion was a pipedream in 1920s Europe, just as it would be for the future Persian Gulf.

To be sure, the prudent management of a balance of power in the Persian Gulf would rely on tools such as political-military contacts, confidence-building measures and perhaps arms control, which the new security-architecture and collective-security advocates emphasize. The important point missed by these observers, however, is that these tools do not change the fundamental geopolitical realities based on a competition of power between states with conflicting national interests and agendas. In other words, these techniques of statecraft, if exercised wisely, lend stability to balance-of-power politics, but they do not allow states to escape the balance-of-power competition altogether.

The future contours of Persian Gulf security likely will resemble those of the past 25 years. Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia will continue to compete for dominance, and the small Gulf states will play off the big three, looking for configurations that best advance their national interests. All — save Iran — will do the same with the United States and, to a lesser extent, the Europeans, Chinese and Russians.

The bull in the china shop will be Iran. Its influence will stem from its large population of about 70 million and from Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).¹⁰ Tehran has an army of 350,000, with four armored divisions, six infantry divisions, two commando divisions and some independent armored, infantry and commando brigades, but it is poorly equipped and trained. The regime's most capable and loyal fighters are in the Revolutionary

Guard Corps of some 100,000 troops, organized into 16-20 divisions. These ground forces give Iran geopolitical weight, but its air force of some 52,000 personnel is equipped with poorly maintained and aging combat aircraft.¹¹

An American over-the-horizon presence would be the instrument of statecraft to tend, mend and shape the struggle for power in the Gulf. The United States would have to act as the balancing power to maintain some loose form of stability. Iraq and Saudi Arabia — with populations of about 25 million and 26 million, respectively¹² — might allow their political competition to prevent them from pooling resources to counterbalance Iran. And the small Arab Gulf states will likely look to the United States for defense reassurance to bolster their autonomies from traditional Saudi influence, especially as they lean toward greater domestic political and economic reforms and freedoms than their Saudi counterparts. Saudi Arabia, too, will likely come under increasing domestic pressure from al-Qaeda and militant Islamic opposition.

The United States needs low-profile military access points or “warm bases” in numerous host countries throughout the region to surge forces into during times of heightened insecurity, rather than a few large-scale permanent installations for prolonged and sustained basing. Arab support for U.S. military operations to be staged from their countries will likely remain problematic, as was the case when Saudi Arabia hampered American war preparations in 2003. A diversified stable of warm bases from which to choose would allow the United States to quickly adjust if one or more countries objected to American military requirements in future

contingencies. If Iraq, for example, were to refuse American forces access to its territory in a future conflict with Iran, the United States might be offered and use warm bases in Kuwait and Bahrain instead.

The United States already has moved very far in this regard to positions in the smaller Gulf states since the 1991 war. Military access to several small Gulf states proved invaluable in the 2003 war in the face of Saudi apprehension. The U.S. term for small, ready-to-activate bases is “lily pads,” which could serve as jumping off points for military operations. In times of relative calm, the United States could pull back forces from these lily pads to conserve its operational tempo.

Washington would be wise to avoid a large-scale permanent military presence on the ground in the Middle East. This would limit the vulnerability of American forces to terrorist and insurgent attacks as well as the claims by Islamic militants that the United States is “colonizing” the region. This is especially sound advice for Iraq, where the Arab fear of American imperialism is particularly strong. The region is not nearly as hospitable to American forces as Europe was in the aftermath of World War II and during the Cold War. Large-scale and permanent American bases in the region would be magnets for Arab political opposition in the form of militant Islamic extremists.

Americans should not harbor any illusion that militant Islamic charges of American colonization that so powerfully resonate in the Arab world will be completely dampened with lower-profile warm bases or lily pads. Al-Qaeda, for example, has hardly given the United States or Saudi Arabia any credit or stopped its attacks

since Washington and Riyadh mutually agreed in 2003 to pull American forces from Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda will remain in the myth-making and zealotry business regardless of the facts on the ground. Many realities, moreover, will remain beyond the grasp of Arab peoples in light of the proliferation of satellite television channels tailoring their products to the consumer demand.

The United States could manage a balance-of-power strategy with about 20,000 military personnel deployed in and around the Persian Gulf, a force presence that would be sustainable by the United States and host countries for the long run. Traditionally the United States has had only a modest military presence in the Gulf during periods between crises despite the popular regional perception of a huge and permanent U.S. force presence. As Richard Kugler has pointed out, reflecting on the past two decades of U.S. presence in the Gulf, only about 11,000 troops are normally stationed ashore in the entire region, with the remaining 10,000 to 14,000 deployed at sea.¹³ The United States, of course, has leveraged this presence to surge in periods of heightened tension, as it did when over 500,000 troops were deployed to the region in the run-up to the 1991 war.

The United States now has deployed about 140,000 troops in Iraq to contain the insurgencies raging there — a force level far short of that of 1990-91 — but significant force reductions could accompany a stabilizing ground situation as Iraqi security forces gain competency in providing internal security. The United States over the longer run could then revert to its more traditional force posture. The lily-pad presence in the Gulf, moreover, would

serve as the foundation for a renewed surge in the event of other regional contingencies, presumably involving Iran.

IRAQ'S ROLE IN THE GULF

Some rough calculations must be undertaken in rebuilding Iraq's military to fit into the American balance-of-power scheme and the use of over-the-horizon forces. Iraq must be strong enough to maintain the internal cohesion of the Iraqi state and to balance Iran, but not so strong that Iraq's military power threatens other American security partners in the Middle East, including Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. But Iraq need not be as powerful as it was under Saddam. As Russell rightly points out, Iran in conventional military terms is not the threat to Gulf security that it was 20 years ago; consequently, Iraq does not have to be as strong militarily as it was then either.¹⁴ The United States, moreover, could make up the deficit for Iraqi military power vis-à-vis Iran with an over-the-horizon capability, especially if Tehran becomes armed with nuclear weapons.

The public discussion of the Iraqi military has been almost exclusively focused on the decision of the Bush administration to disband the army shortly after the occupation. Those who favored this argue that the Iraqi military evaporated during combat and that the postwar looting destroyed its logistics infrastructure, leaving nothing to preserve. Opponents of the decision argue that, even if the army was militarily ineffective as an institution, its abolition disenfranchised hundreds of thousands of weapons-trained soldiers who were unemployed, unable to provide for their families, and ripe for recruitment into Sunni and Shia insurgent groups. The

decision, as James Fallows recounts, “created an instant enemy class: hundreds of thousands of men who still had their weapons but no longer had a paycheck or a place to go each day. Manpower that could have helped on security patrols became part of the security threat.”¹⁵ Preserving the military would at least have subsidized Iraqi society for a longer transition period.

The disbanding of Iraq’s army is history. Now serious policy attention has to turn to the future. What might the Iraqi army look like in the longer run if it is to meet internal and external security challenges and yet not overly threaten its neighbors? The Iraqi force structure 10 to 25 years from now is hard to estimate given the variables of the internal security situation, revenues from Iraq’s oil industry, government tax collection and private-sector income generation, and other politically determined priorities. And Iraq’s financial constraints in the initial 5 to 10 years will be severe due to limited budgets and great demand for economic reconstruction. Iraq might eventually spend defense sums comparable to its immediate neighbors. Kuwait, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are estimated to have annual defense expenditures of about \$4.0 billion, \$3.5 billion, and \$19.3 billion, respectively.¹⁶

What is more certain is that the Iraqis will likely find the levels floated sometime ago as grossly incommensurate with the prestige and geopolitical significance of their country. In summer 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) envisioned a new Iraqi army of some 40,000 personnel organized into three light-infantry divisions.¹⁷ The CPA in January 2004 spelled out more details of plans for manning, training and equipping the new Iraqi armed

forces of nine infantry brigades — presumably with three battalions, each with 757 soldiers — as well as a small coastal defense force and an aviation element primarily of helicopters and transport aircraft.¹⁸ Iraqis will not likely consider a 40,000 light-infantry force a serious one, especially in a security environment that traditionally has been dominated by armored and air warfare. Iraqi officers, moreover, will still have a lingering longing for large standing force structures reminiscent of the tens of infantry, armored and mechanized divisions Iraq fielded in its army as well as several more elite Republican Guard divisions during the Iran-Iraq War.

The United States might turn to the military modernization of Egypt and Turkey as benchmarks for remaking Iraq’s military. Both countries are geopolitically significant in the Middle East — Egypt with a population of about 76 million and Turkey with a population of about 69 million¹⁹ — and have stable relations with their neighbors even though both have sizable and politically influential militaries whose backing is critical to regime stability. Both militaries, moreover, are modernizing under U.S. sponsorship. Iraqi officials in time will no doubt come to see the analogies for themselves and turn to Egypt and Turkey as models for the development of their military. That comparison would be much like those that the Turks and the Egyptians make to Greece and Israel, respectively, in their own security partnerships with the United States. All military power, after all, is relative.

Iraq, Egypt and Turkey are roughly comparable, as are their resources available for military force structures, and they enjoy unique security relationships with the United States. Egypt has an army of

320,000 men equipped with 550 M1A1 tanks, while Turkey has an army of 402,000 with 397 German-made Leopard tanks.²⁰ To be roughly comparable to Egypt and Turkey, Iraq would probably want an order of 10 divisions with a mix of armored, mechanized and infantry. The heavy forces would be especially needed to reassure the Iraqis vis-à-vis the larger Iranian army, even if Tehran's armor is aging and obsolescent.

Much discussion today focuses on the rebuilding of the Iraqi internal-security forces and army, but scant attention is paid to the future of Iraqi air forces. The Bush administration has made only a token gesture in this direction with the formation of air service to largely support the transportation and logistics needs of the army, not to provide operational or strategic firepower and force-projection capabilities. As with the case of ground forces, Egyptian and Turkish air forces are useful models for the future Iraqi air force. Egypt's air force has 30,000 men and is equipped with two squadrons of F-16A and seven with 113 F-16Cs. Ankara has an air force of 60,100 men equipped with 9 fighter squadrons with F-16 C/Ds.²¹ Baghdad, to be comparable to Egyptian and Turkish air forces, would want at a minimum several squadrons of aircraft of capabilities comparable to the F-16.

A viable Iraqi military would need to have an air force and long-range strike capabilities if it is to feel secure against the threat posed by Iran's growing ballistic-missile programs. The stark reality is that unless Iraq has a viable air force, Baghdad would be under enormous pressure to resurrect Saddam's mothballed ballistic-missile programs. An Iraqi defense posture in the longer run that relies exclu-

sively on American airpower for protection of Iraqi airspace and to deter as well as retaliate against Iranian ballistic missiles would not be politically or militarily viable for the Iraqi government, which would be vulnerable to charges of being American puppets.

A reasonably strong Iraqi air force might also work to dampen Iraq's strategic interest in rekindling a nuclear-weapons program. The Iraqis in the longer run will be increasingly concerned about the scope and magnitude of Iran's nuclear weapons program. And powerful geopolitical forces will press on Baghdad for a nuclear option even without Saddam in power.²² A capable Iraqi air force might dampen these pressures by reassuring Baghdad that it would have long-strike conventional air capabilities to help deter Iran from nuclear brinkmanship. The Iraqis would be able to threaten Tehran with conventional retaliation should it use Iranian ballistic missiles to strike targets deep inside Iraq.

AMERICAN STATECRAFT AND THE GULF

The flexibility of a balance-of-power strategy for the Gulf would be the greatest asset to American statecraft in a region that is politically, economically, demographically and militarily volatile. No collective-security organization would prove durable, practical or effective in such a security environment. The balance-of-power strategy and over-the-horizon military capabilities to manage the strategy would be based on mutual interest and power from both the U.S. perspective and from the perspectives of regional-security partners. Given the anti-American sentiment in the region, Washington would be foolish to base its strategic posture in the

region on the assumption of friendship.

The security environment in the Persian Gulf is so fluid that extending American security guarantees to Saudi Arabia and the small GCC states to come to their defense in any and all circumstances — most, if not all of which, will be unforeseen — is too rigid a security commitment for the United States. As Simon Henderson notes of the variety of security arrangements that the United States has with the small Arab Gulf states, “U.S. officials familiar with the individual security pacts report that Washington is not formally required to come to the aid of any conservative Arab Gulf state under attack.”²³ Future American presidents would value the preservation of this flexibility to weigh on a case-by-case basis the benefits and costs to American security in future contingencies.

American interests in the Gulf remain the ready access of the world economy to reasonably priced oil and reassurance that no state grows in power to threaten the autonomy of other states in the region. Such a consolidation of power — in the worst case, the establishment of an empire in the Gulf — would allow that dominant power to have a stranglehold over the lion’s share of the world’s proven oil reserves and ability to choke the global economy. Such a situation almost occurred under Saddam in 1990. To this list of strategic interests, the United States in the post-9/11 period must keep a watchful eye on the internal security of Gulf states to deny sanctuary, logistics, training and recruiting for al-Qaeda. The United States must also watch out for contingencies in which royal families, especially in Saudi Arabia, fall victim to al-Qaeda-inspired insurgencies or civil wars as well as

against the use of WMD, whether in the hands of Islamic insurgents or by regional states locked in combat.

The development of Iraq’s ground and air forces speculated on here would take place over a long-term horizon of about 10 to 25 years. These developments would have to dovetail with political maturity to assure regional states that Iraqi military power would be used to counter the growth of Iranian power in the region, especially if Tehran is armed with nuclear weapons. If, along the way, the government in Baghdad stumbles and falls, the charted course on the development of Iraqi military capabilities would have to be adjusted.

Some observers might be tempted to argue for the United States to extend a nuclear deterrence umbrella as a “quick fix” to maintain the regional balance of power and to “solve” the dilemma of Iraqi security vis-à-vis looming Iranian nuclear-weapons capabilities. The American provision of a nuclear shield to Iraq would be a grave strategic misstep, however. It could only reinforce the already strong regional perception that nuclear weapons are a critical requirement for adequate defenses in the post-9/11 security environment. Any government in Baghdad, moreover, would be substantially less confident in the American willingness to threaten nuclear-weapons use on its behalf than the NATO allies were during the Cold War. How many in old Europe — or in the United States for that matter — were absolutely confident that Washington would risk Soviet nuclear retaliation against the continental United States for the sake of defending West Berlin? If the American nuclear umbrella in Europe during the Cold War had some holes, an American nuclear

cover for Iraq would be a sieve.

Washington needs to dampen the regional appetite for nuclear weapons. A good place to start is by putting substantially less emphasis in its own defense posture on nuclear weapons while placing more weight on unsurpassed American conventional military capabilities for deterrence. The United States in the Persian Gulf, for example, might threaten massive conventional military retaliation against any regime, such as the one in Tehran, that tries to wield nuclear weapons for political purposes. Washington, moreover, would be strategically better off lending ballistic-missile defense assistance to Baghdad than extending a nuclear deterrent umbrella.²⁴

Iraq's ground and air order-of-battle will give regional players strategic unease unless they have reassurance regarding Baghdad's political intentions. Political confidence will play a critical role in Gulf security, much as it has in the Arab-Israeli conflict. While diplomacy has miserably failed to deliver peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, it has brilliantly succeeded in solidifying peace — even if a cold one — between Israel and Egypt and Jordan. Israel today does not see Egypt as the front-row threat it once was because it is confident that it could effectively counter Egypt's military capabilities. More important, Israel is confident for the near term of its southern border because a diplomatic peace settlement has been negotiated with Cairo, an arrangement in which Egyptian and Israeli mutual national interests are accommodated.

Diplomacy would have to be the handmaiden of Iraqi military development

to nurture political reassurance. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will need to have strong ties with Iraq's political and military leaderships as a means of reassurance. Tel Aviv will need to have some confidence that air forces would not threaten Israel. Washington, Tel Aviv and Baghdad could negotiate an arrangement by which the Iraqis would not permanently base combat aircraft in western Iraq and could arrange for pre-notification of Tel Aviv of any training exercises over western Iraqi airspace. Such arrangements could be concluded privately and would not require formal diplomatic relations between Israel and Iraq. Similar arrangements also could be made to reassure Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey, Jordan and possibly even Iran.

In the final analysis, most states in the region will look to the United States as the "grand balancer of power" and as the fail-safe actor in the event that the political orientation of the Baghdad government goes bad and Iraq reverts to its old habit of holding Iran at bay while asserting domination over the Gulf Arab states. While some observers argue that the GCC could constructively invite Iraq to join, the likely result, given the competing political-military agendas of the states, would be a GCC plus Iraq that is even more divided and feckless than the GCC is today. Tel Aviv must worry that an intrusive part of that Iraqi behavior would be a reversion to an anti-Israeli posture to play to the Arab masses and establish leadership *bona fides* in the Arab world. Such a course would be a perverse "back to the future" replay of failed Arab politics; but old habits die hard, especially in the Middle East.

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¹ James A. Russell, "Searching for a Post-Saddam Regional Security Architecture," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (March 2003), p. 33.

² Joseph McMillan, Richard Sokolsky, and Andrew C. Winner, "Toward a New Regional Security Architecture," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2003), p. 167.

³ Russell, "Searching for a Post-Saddam Regional Security Architecture," p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Kenneth M. Pollack, "Securing the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August 2003), p. 12.

⁶ Ray Takeyh and Steven A. Cook, "America Has a Golden Chance to Tame Iran," *Financial Times*, 14 October 2004. For a tempered analysis of the potential relevance of the OSCE experience to the Middle East, see Craig G. Dunkerley, "Considering Security Amidst Strategic Change: The OSCE Experience," *Middle East Policy* XI, no. 3 (Fall 2004).

⁷ Graham E. Fuller, *The Youth Factor: The New Demographics of the Middle East and the Implications of U.S. Policy*, Analysis Paper no. 3 (Washington, DC: Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, June 2003), p. 2.

⁸ Inis Claude has done the most expert analysis of collective security, although his work regrettably has not gotten the attention of today's collective security advocates. See Claude's *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962) and *Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (New York: Random House, 1971).

⁹ Michael D. Yaffe, "The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System," *Middle East Policy* XI, no. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 121.

¹⁰ For Iran's population, see Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2004) available at <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2119.html>.

¹¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2004-2005* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 124-125.

¹² Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book*.

¹³ Richard L. Kugler, "U.S. Defense Strategy and Force Planning," Chapter Five in Richard D. Sokolsky (ed.), *The United States and the Persian Gulf: Reshaping Security Strategy for the Post-Containment Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2003), p. 92.

¹⁴ Russell, "Searching for a Post-Saddam Regional Security Architecture," p. 32.

¹⁵ James Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad," *The Atlantic Monthly* (January/February 2004), p. 74. For a pre-war argument for preserving the Iraqi army in the course of the war while vigorously destroying the pillars of Saddam's regime in the Republican Guard and the Special Republican Guard, see Richard L. Russell, "War and the Iraq Dilemma: Facing Harsh Realities," *Parameters* XXXII, no. 3 (Autumn 2002), p. 54.

¹⁶ *Military Balance 2004-2005*, pp. 302-304.

¹⁷ Jeffrey White, "The New Iraqi Army: Problems and Prospects," *Policy Watch*, no. 771, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 8 July 2003.

¹⁸ Maj. Gen. Paul Easton, commander, Coalition Military Assistance Training Team, "Coalition Provisional Authority Briefing," U.S. Department of Defense, 21 January 2004. The responsibilities for recruiting, training, and equipping the Iraqi military with the turn over of power to Iraq's transition government has been passed to the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq.

¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book*.

²⁰ *Military Balance 2004-2005*, pp. 71 and 122.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72 and 123.

²² For a thoughtful and provocative examination of pressures on post-Saddam Iraq to turn to nuclear weapons, see Andrew Flibert, "After Saddam: Regional Insecurity, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Proliferation in Postwar Iraq," *Political Science Quarterly* 118, no. 4 (Winter 2003-2004).

²³ Simon Henderson, *The New Pillar: Conservative Arab Gulf States and U.S. Strategy* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003), p. 73.

²⁴ For a treatment of ballistic-missile defenses in the region, see Richard L. Russell, "Swords and Shields: Ballistic Missiles and Defenses in the Middle East and South Asia," *Orbis* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2002).