

The Iraq Study Group Report The Way Forward – A New Approach

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Excerpts concerning the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

I. Executive Summary

... "The United States cannot achieve its goals in the Middle East unless it deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict and regional instability. There must be a renewed and sustained commitment by the United States to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace on all fronts: Lebanon, Syria, and President Bush's June 2002 commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. This commitment must include direct talks with, by, and between Israel, Lebanon, Palestinians (those who accept Israel's right to exist), and Syria." ...

4. The Wider Regional Context

"The United States will not be able to achieve its goals in the Middle East unless the United States deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There must be a renewed and sustained commitment by the United States to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace on all fronts: Lebanon, Syria, and President Bush's June 2002 commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. This commitment must include direct talks with, by, and between Israel, Lebanon, Palestinians (those who accept Israel's right to exist), and particularly Syria – which is the principal transit point for shipment of weapons to Hezbollah, and which supports radical Palestinian groups.

The United States does its ally Israel no favors in avoiding direct involvement to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. For several reasons, we should act boldly:

- There is no military solution to this conflict.
- The vast majority of the Israeli body politics is tired of being a nation perpetually at war.
- No American administration – Democratic or Republican – will ever abandon Israel.
- Political engagement and dialogue are essential in the Arab-Israeli dispute because it is an axiom that when the political process breaks down there will be violence on the ground.
- The only basis on which peace can be achieved is that set forth in UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and in the principle of 'land for peace.'
- The only lasting and secure peace will be a negotiated peace such as Israel has achieved with Egypt and Jordan.

This effort would strongly support moderate Arab governments in the region, especially the democratically elected government of Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority under President Mahmoud Abbas.

RECOMMENDATION 13: There must be a renewed and sustained commitment by the United States to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace on all fronts: Lebanon and Syria, and President Bush's June 2002 commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.

RECOMMENDATION 14: This effort should include – as soon as possible – the unconditional calling and holding of meetings, under the auspices of the United States or the Quartet (i.e., the United States, Russia, European Union, and the United Nations), between Israel and Lebanon and Syria on the one hand, and Israel and Palestinians (who acknowledge Israel's right to exist) on the other. The purpose of these meetings would be to negotiate peace as was done at the Madrid Conference in 1991, and on two separate tracks – one Syrian/Lebanese, and the other Palestinian.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Concerning Syria, some elements of that negotiated peace should be:

- Syria's full adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 of August 2006, which provides the framework for Lebanon to regain sovereign control over its territory.
- Syria's full cooperation with all investigations into political assassinations in Lebanon, especially those of Rafik Hariri and Pierre Gemayel.
- A verifiable cessation of Syrian aid to Hezbollah and the use of Syrian territory for transshipment of Iranian weapons and aid to Hezbollah. (This step would do much to solve Israel's problem with Hezbollah.)
- Syria's use of its influence with Hamas and Hezbollah for the release of the captured Israeli Defense Force soldiers.
- A verifiable cessation of Syrian efforts to undermine the democratically elected government of Lebanon.
- A verifiable cessation of arms shipments from or transiting through Syria for Hamas and other radical Palestinian groups.
- A Syrian commitment to help obtain from Hamas an acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist.
- Greater Syrian efforts to seal its borders with Iraq.

RECOMMENDATION 16: In exchange for these actions and in the context of a full and secure peace agreement, the Israelis should return the Golan Heights, with a U.S. security guarantee for Israel that could include an international force on the border, including U.S. troops if requested by both parties.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Concerning the Palestinian issue, elements of that negotiated peace should include:

- Adherence to UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and to the principle of land for peace, which are the only bases for achieving peace.

- Strong support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority to take the lead in preparing the way to negotiations with Israel.
- A major effort to move from the current hostilities by consolidating the cease-fire reached between the Palestinians and Israelis in November 2006.
- Support for a Palestinian national united government.
- Sustainable negotiations leading to a final peace settlement along the lines of President Bush's two-state solution, which would address the key final issues of borders, settlements, Jerusalem, the right of return, and the end of conflict.”