

convinces Syria to stop backing Hezbollah, space might open up for a more moderate Shiite leadership in Lebanon. But the prospects for such moderation will depend heavily on a revival of the Arab-Israeli peace process, since only a comprehensive peace that includes Syria will give Damascus cause to rein in Hezbollah.

Elsewhere in the Arab world, events in Iraq will be less significant, although hardly irrelevant. In Jordan, the paralysis of the peace process, rising Islamist passions, and economic crisis have prompted King Abdullah to reverse an earlier political liberalization. A resumption of trade with Iraq, and even more, the creation of a pluralistic regime in Baghdad, will set the stage for the holding of elections in Jordan, which as of this writing had been postponed twice. But if Iraq

fragments or if radical Shiite clerics triumph, the king will carefully manage these and any elections to ensure that Iraq's malaise does not spread southward.

Egypt's leaders knew that the creation of a pro-Western Iraq would undermine Egypt's geo-strategic position. They have pushed to accelerate economic reform and to reinvigorate the semiofficial National Democratic Party. President Hosni Mubarak and his allies are determined to ensure the state's control over all further political reforms.

Further west, Iraq becomes less relevant. Algeria is still recovering from civil war and is unlikely to move much beyond its state of fragmentation. As for Morocco, until the recent terrorist bombings in Casablanca, further political liberalization seemed in the offing. But

Can Iran and the United States Bridge the Gulf? | *By George Perkovich*

The future of Iran and its relations with the United States will significantly shape the character of the post-Iraq war world. With a population nearly three times that of Iraq, and a budding but still repressed democratic political culture, Iran could be the catalyst for a reformed Middle East. But with nuclear weapons and continued support for anti-Israel terrorists, Iran could also be the region's most disruptive force.

Judging from the mixture of silence and recrimination coming from Tehran and Washington, neither government has either a strategy or tactics for capitalizing on postwar opportunities. The United States has removed two of the most direct security threats that could motivate Iran's quest for nuclear weapons: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Pakistan-backed Taliban (the others are Israel and the United States itself). Yet, Washington's "axis of evil" rhetoric and veiled threats have negated any comfort that these two actions might otherwise have conveyed to Iranian decision-makers. The U.S. doctrine of preemption, paired with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's aggressive security policy in

Israel, may intensify Iranian security officials' quest for a nuclear deterrent. Or, as U.S. officials hope, the prospect of close U.S. military support for the new Iraq could induce Iran to comply with U.S. demands to end Iran's nuclear program and its support for terrorist organizations. For their part, Iranian leaders have made at best only thickly veiled diplomatic overtures to the United States.

If Israel and the Palestinians need a "road map," the United States, Iran, and Iraq need a navigational chart to bring stability and security to the Persian Gulf. Washington and Tehran are now the most powerful (and estranged) actors in the region; they must clarify their intentions:

- What policies would Iran have to adopt to prompt the United States and its protectorates (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and now Iraq) to grant Iran the prominent place in the gulf that its size and history warrant?
- Under what conditions would the

United States and its protectorates conclude that the American military presence in the region could be reduced dramatically, as the Iranians wish?

- How do the United States and Israel, as possessors of weapons of mass destruction, propose to reassure Iran that it does not need such weapons for its security?
- How do Iran and the United States plan to help establish new security relations between postwar Iraq and Iran, recalling that Iraq started the brutal eight-year war with Iran in 1980 and attacked it with chemical weapons?
- In a world of enforced norms against terrorism, how can Iran be integrated into the international political economy if it does not explicitly recognize Israel's existence? If Iran does explicitly recognize Israel, how will it gain?

The removal of Saddam Hussein gives the United States, Iran, and other neighboring states a much needed chance to chart a safer, more secure, course for Persian Gulf relations. But diplomacy in this case may take more political courage than war.

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