



Civic Caucus

8301 Creekside Circle, #920, Bloomington, MN 55337

civicaucus@comcast.net

DATE: April 16, 2003

Middle East Position Report

US MIDDLE EAST POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The United States, as well as the rest of the world, is entering what many believe is one of the most dangerous eras in history. Despite impressive progress, an independent democratic society in Afghanistan has not yet become a stable reality, nor is the required continued US leadership and economic assistance assured. Although the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq appears all but ended, the challenge ahead to replace it with an Iraqi led democracy is just about to begin. The world and particularly the Arab world is watching with serious skepticism. The US image in the Arab world is seen as one of partnership with Israel rather than as an independent force to assure a fair peace in the Middle East.

It is in this context that the Civic Caucus feels an urgent need to contribute and communicate our conclusions and recommendations for US foreign policy leadership in the months and years ahead. The constructive leadership of the US has never been more urgently required in this time of deep controversy, not only about the mission of the US, but about its motives and its commitment to stay the course until the challenges have been met.

The dispute between Israel and Palestine, finds the world watching to see if the US is truly interested in exerting its leadership capability in securing a lasting and secure Israel and an independent state of Palestine. Will the US show a bias in favor of its close ties to Israel or will it demonstrate independent judgment?

Too few see the merits of the legitimate arguments of both nations. And even fewer fully understand and appreciate the terrible consequences a broad religious based conflict can mean for both sides, and for the rest of the world. There are few absolutes involved. Most decisions involve compromise and such compromises must be led by other than the two parties to the dispute.

Recent developments motivate us - for the purpose of stimulating thought and discussion - to develop the following Middle East Policy statement. The issues involved and the consequences of inadequate leadership vision are of such vital importance to our future that we citizens must be informed and involved.

The beliefs stated below build on and are consistent with the broader foreign policy vision the civic

caucus developed earlier in response to the challenges posed by 9/11 - a vision which was agreed to unanimously by caucus participants and signed onto by quite a number of others. A copy of this vision will be sent upon request.

MIDDLE EAST POLICY STATEMENT

1. Seeking peace between Israel and Palestine must be among the US's principal near term foreign policy objectives.

True and lasting peace in the middle east can only be achieved if both the Palestinians and the Israelis are guaranteed territories of their own, access to holy shrines, natural resources including water, and protection for their sovereign rights.

2. Terrorist acts, for whatever reason, are intolerable and cannot be justified.

Without justifying the resort to terrorism by certain Palestinians they manifest a combination of acts of desperation and deliberate attempts to block any settlement and are a reflection of frustration with the inability to achieve objectives by any other means. Furthermore, terroristic attacks against the Israelis are, at least in part, related to the Israeli occupation of disputed territories and establishing permanent settlements on them. Whatever the reasons, Palestinian leadership must unequivocally declare its opposition to terrorist acts as a tactic and assign major priority to assuring that terrorism does not continue.

Equally challenging is the seeming determination, by certain Israeli leaders, to find ways to block the formation of a Palestinian state despite the fact that Israeli polls show that a majority of the population favors this end result.

3. An overriding objective of US. foreign policy must be to achieve a JUST settlement of the territorial dispute.

Both the Palestinians and the Israelis have strong historical and religious claims to the geographical territories in dispute. The overriding objective of both nations and the rest of the world, however, must be a just settlement and an end to terrorism. The alternative is unending violence. A just settlement must include:

a. Establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, with access between the two, and with access to natural resources including water, for both nations.

b. Full recognition of the state of Israel by Arab states, including Palestine, with boundaries roughly along the pre-1967 borders.

c. Cessation by Israel of settlements in the West Bank and evacuation of most of them.

d. Renegotiating the Palestinian claimed "right of return" for its refugees, utilizing other means to compensate the displaced.

4. The essentials of A JUST settlement must be developed, if necessary, by major nations with significant Israeli and multi-Arab nation involvement.

The two sides to the dispute, each having such sensitive and strongly held religious and political views, are unlikely, on their own, to agree to a just settlement.

5. The security of each of the two independent nations must be assured through the participation of the United States, other nations, and the involvement of the UN.

Such security forces must have the confidence of both sides to the dispute. This assurance includes the likely necessity of US. participation in an international force.

6. The proposed "road map" developed by and agreed to by ministers from the US, The European Union, the UN and Russia is an essential foundation upon which to build a negotiated settlement of this seemingly insolvable issue.

Leadership initiatives by the US, major world nations, and Arab nations has never been so urgently needed. We urge that the United States move immediately to provide this needed leadership.

7. Concurrence by the leading nations of the world in support of the "roadmap" would make it exceedingly difficult for the Israelis and Palestinians to continue their seemingly adamant positions.

The specifics of a just settlement could then be worked out in subsequent sessions and stages.

8. The United States chief negotiator in the upcoming minister's conference will play the foremost role in bringing the nations to agreement on a just settlement and must have the confidence of the other participants.

Colin Powell best personifies the personal qualifications, the stature and the confidence of others, as well as the tone, that must be projected by the US.

9. A plan, similar to the Marshall Plan is essential to the democratization and economic well being of the new Palestine nation and to maintaining peace in the area.

President Bush has proposed a "Marshall Plan" for Afghanistan as an imperative to lasting peace. Similarly, a "Marshall Plan" is essential for the Palestinian nation and for its refugees and their relocation. Such financial support must be conditioned on structural changes that assure both democratization and that the funds will be devoted to the intended purpose.

Both geographical areas of the world remain unacceptably economically poor and are breeding grounds for terrorist actions. Aggressive US leadership in concert with other major powers, both policy and financial, is imperative to ultimate peaceful relations.

10. The current magnitude of US. and major power financial assistance to underdeveloped nations

such as Palestine and Afghanistan is grossly less than it should be and must be in the future.

Without improving the education and economic viability of these nations' people, a democratic society is unattainable and unrest and ongoing terrorist attacks are inevitable. Education is essential to a democratic society and to economic progress.

Economic aid will be far less costly and much more effective than the alternative of living in fear, losing our mobility, dramatically strengthening our armed forces and fighting brush fires throughout much of the world.