

# MEMMO

---

Dec. 7, 2006

## Solving Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Noble Goal, but to Stabilize Middle East We Will Have to Rein in Iran

**Some have suggested that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the key to stabilizing Iraq and other regional conflicts. While achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians is an important goal, such an achievement would have no major impact on solving the other conflicts plaguing the region. An Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement would not end the sectarian fighting between Shias and Sunnis in Iraq, stop Syria's efforts to dominate Lebanon, thwart Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and regional hegemony nor end the threat of Islamic terrorism.**

---

Solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the solution for resolving other intractable conflicts in the region.

- In Iraq, Shias and Sunnis are fighting each other for internal historical reasons and would not end their centuries-old fighting if the Israel-Palestinian conflict were solved tomorrow.
- Likewise, an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement would not result in Hizballah deciding to disarm or force Syria to give up its desire to dominate Beirut.
- Iran's quest for nuclear weapons, regional dominance and desire to destroy Israel would also not change if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were solved.
- Al-Qaeda, which views our values and culture as a threat, would still seek to attack the United States and our allies. Some of the terrorist group's major attacks against the United States—such as the 1998 African embassy bombings—came during the height of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.
- Emphasizing solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict now—when the Palestinians are incapable of either making peace or governing—misplaces the focus of international efforts to bring peace and stability to the region.
- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has spoken out against the notion of linking progress in Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, stating: "I think we have to be careful not to say, well, if there's a Palestinian-Israeli breakthrough, that will help in Iraq. Iraq is involved in its own struggles."

Iran remains at the core of instability in the Middle East.

- The Iranian regime continues to play a central role in promoting Islamic extremism throughout the Middle East, encouraging sectarian conflict in Iraq, providing critical financial and diplomatic support to the terrorist groups Hizballah and Hamas and provoking civil strife in Lebanon.
- Tehran's pursuit of nuclear weapons in defiance of U.N. Security council demands could spark a regional nuclear arms race, while its vision of a world without Israel and America remains a beacon for radical jihadists.

- Attention should be focused on confronting Iran with serious consequences if it does not end its destructive activities, which undermine U.S. efforts to support moderate forces that could lead to peaceful solutions between Israel and the Palestinians and in Lebanon and Iraq.

It is in the moderate Arab states' own interests to help block the spread of Islamic radicalism irrespective of the status of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

- The moderate Sunni Arab states fear a Shia extremist crescent fomented by Iran through Iraq into Lebanon and beyond. Jordan's King Abdullah said in 2004 that Iran's sponsorship of terrorist groups in Iraq and Lebanon "will be very destabilizing for the Gulf countries and for the whole region."
- Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and the Persian Gulf states fear that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could spark a dangerous nuclear arms race in the Middle East, destabilize the region and drain badly needed resources from their economies.
- Iran's support of radical Islamic terrorist groups such as Hizballah, Hamas and Shia militias in Iraq is a direct assault on Sunni Arab regimes' legitimacy and hold on power.

---

### Basic Facts Summary

- Solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the solution for resolving other intractable conflicts in the region.
- Iran remains at the core of instability in the Middle East.
- It is in moderate Arab states' interests to help block the spread of Islamic radicalism irrespective of the status of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.