

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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ATTACHMENT

October 3, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI *ZB*
SUBJECT: NSC Weekly Report #156

1. Opinion

Long-Term Implications of the Iran-Iraq War. The war is likely to be one of attrition. Iraq has bitten off more than it can chew, not to speak of digesting. Iran will not acquiesce to this. Accordingly, the conflict will be destructive not only to the two protagonists but potentially to the region as a whole. Protracted warfare could generate more tensions and at some point it could involve the other Gulf states. That prospect gives rise to a number of questions:

- Can Iran live without Khuzistan?
- Which way will Iran go politically?
- How will the Soviets exploit the likely feelers from Iran for military help, as well as Iraq's appeals for the replenishment of its military stock?
- When will the Soviet Union step forward as the peacemaker and how can we prevent it from becoming the "guarantor" of the region's stability?
- Will Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states gravitate toward Iraq?
- Will Shia passions promote increasing unrest in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia?
- What will be the effect on all of that on Israel's willingness to compromise?
- Finally, what will all this do to our position in the region?

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Review October 3, 2000
Extended by Z. Brzezinski
Reason: NSC 1.13(a) (f)

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
PER *8/16/97 NLS* RE *NLS-96-141*
BY *J* NARS. DATE *12/11/97*

In this short memo I do not propose to address all of these questions but I list them to highlight the scope and the gravity of the problem that we now confront. So far, we have responded well, and I think you are entitled to claim greater public credit for this than so far has been given. We have openly committed ourselves to keep the Strait of Hormuz open; we have protected our position in Saudi Arabia; and we have not tilted to either of the protagonists. We have thus avoided a break with the Arabs, while keeping our options open with the Iranians.

The threat to the security of the Gulf gives us also a unique opportunity to consolidate our security position in a manner which even a few weeks ago would have been not possible. The Saudis and the other Gulf states are much more inclined to seek U.S. military presence since they have become very anxious about their longer-term security. While we should not appear over-eager in proffering our military assistance, we would miss a major strategic opportunity if we fail to exploit this. Accordingly, I am very much in favor of expanding our present military role, especially in terms of air defense systems and major presence, along the lines of Harold's recommendations.

Looking beyond these immediate steps regarding the Persian Gulf, we need to initiate both more subtle and more covert initiatives regarding Iran. While reinforcing our position in Saudi Arabia, and while not clashing with Arab aspirations (and thus while not openly opposing Iraq), we should actively seek new contacts with Iran to explore the possibility of helping it just enough to put sufficient pressure on Iraq to pull back from most, if not all, of its current acquisitions. Only by attempting to do this can we make the needed effort to safeguard Iran from Soviet penetration or internal disintegration.

To accomplish this task will not be easy, especially in the current circumstances. The Iranian leadership at the very top is irrational and fanatical. The radicals, moreover, have also a stake in keeping tensions high with the United States. Nonetheless, there must be a great many Iranians, including in the present leadership, who must realize that the present fate of Iran is the by-product of its isolation from the United States. If encouraged, they might either be able to put enough pressure on Khomeini to alter his position or to take action to alter the existing power arrangements in Tehran.

Our present contacts with the Iranians are primarily through the Swiss and the Germans. That may be good enough insofar as the hostage issue is concerned, but I suspect that it will not suffice insofar as the longer-term strategic issue is concerned. I think there are four governments which could be enlisted for the kind of dialogue I feel we need to initiate: Algeria, Turkey, Pakistan, and China. Each, in its own way, has some influence in Tehran, and each has a reason to be sympathetic to our efforts. Certainly

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the last three should favor efforts to preserve the strategic line south of the Soviet Union, running from the northern Turkish frontier through the Caspian Sea to Pakistan. Even the Algerians have a stake in an outcome which avoids the fragmentation of Iran (I attach at Tab A an extremely interesting and revealing discussion of this problem by the Algerian Foreign Minister, whom I had gotten to know in the course of my visit to Algiers, and whose judgment I respect).

I do not believe efforts to use these governments can be initiated through traditional diplomatic channels. Some genuinely private and secret initiatives are needed, exploiting whatever ties of personal confidence we have at the top levels of these governments. These initiatives need to be orchestrated carefully, and they should be focused on Iran's survival and not directly on the hostage issue, though if successful they could have the effect of being helpful not only on the longer-term strategic matter but on the more immediate problem of the hostages as well. Only you can get this process underway.

2. National Security Affairs Calendar (Tab B)

Weekly Reports to the President, 151-161: 8/80-12/80