

Post-invasion Iraq / United States should negotiate with Syria

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Position: United States should negotiate with Syria

This position addresses the topic Post-invasion Iraq.

For this position

“ It looks like a long shot now. And much will depend on the willingness of Iran to play ball. Yet all but the most extreme hardliners in Tehran have long sought dialogue with the US. Like Syria's leadership, what they really want from Washington is legitimacy and respect. More than current confrontationalism, such developments, if carefully nurtured, could ultimately advance the US aim of a democratic Middle East.”

From Time for Bush to talk to Iran and Syria, by Simon Tisdall (*The Guardian*, October 25, 2006) ([view](#))

“ The governments of Syria and Iran do not wish the United States well. They relish the American quagmire in Iraq and have done all they can to help create it. But they may not want to see Iraq dissolve into all-out civil war, either. A regional firestorm could engulf them as well, and send waves of refugees their way. So it may be that the United States, the government of Iraq and the regimes in Syria and Tehran could have a common interest in keeping the lid on the civil war in Iraq.”

From Talk to the enemy: U.S. should explore common interests with Syria, Iran, by The Salt Lake Tribune editorial board (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, November 23, 2006) ([view](#))

“ President Bush need not wait for the release of a commission report to convene a conference and invite all of the key players in Iraq's future: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, as well as representatives of the Gulf Coordination Council, the European Union and the U.N. Agreeing on a mutual duty to respect and uphold Iraq's territorial integrity would be the first goal.”

From U.S. should lead Iraq summit, by Los Angeles Times editorial board (*Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 2006) ([view](#))

“ Iran seems to be interested in heading off a regional conflict between Sunni and Shiite movements. Syria, desperate to end its own isolation, has been advertising its willingness to help calm Iraq and to open peace talks with Israel.”

From A Diplomatic Avenue, by The Washington Post editorial board (*The Washington Post*,

March 1, 2007) (view)

“ "Ms. Rice's words Tuesday were right, but we'll now see whether she simply tossed them out to try to get \$100 billion for the war or the administration truly understands that real dialogue with Iran and Syria is vital -- for the future of the region and for the future of the United States in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East." ”

From Talk of talks: Let's hope the U.S. is serious on Iran and Syria, by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorial board (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 1, 2007) (view)

“ "Mr. Bush needs to use the present crisis to justify new and wide-ranging talks with Syria and Iran, and, if necessary, indirectly with Hamas and Hezbollah. These rank at the top of the world's nastiest and most untrustworthy negotiating partners, but they also happen to be the ones causing most of the trouble--and are, therefore, the ones we have to deal with." ”

From Time to Talk, by Leslie H. Gelb (*The Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2006) (view)

“ "Because of the sectarian violence threatening to rip the country apart, it will be impossible to settle the civil war without thinking of Baghdad's more powerful neighbors, including Syria and Iran." ”

From The Time to Negotiate Is Now, by Robert K. Brigham (*The Washington Post*, January 14, 2007) (view)

“ "You could put 100,000 more troops in tomorrow and you're only going to add to the number of casualties until Iraqis sit down together at a bargaining table and compromise. The barrel of a gun can't answer the question of how you force Iraqi nationalism to trump sectarian loyalty." ”

From When Resolve Turns Reckless, by John Kerry (*The Washington Post*, December 24, 2006) (view)

“ "So the Iraqi government, which is financed by American money and protected with American lives, can deal with the Syrians and the Iranians at the highest levels. But our own government cannot or will not. That is simply senseless." ”

From The madness of George, by Joe Conason (*Salon.com*, December 1, 2006) (view)

Against this position

“ "What really bothers Mr. Bush's critics is his refusal to hold higher-level, higher-profile talks with Iran and Syria that would amount to a public-relations windfall for these regimes. They disregard the fact that the Bush administration -- like many of its predecessors -- has tried time and again to resolve differences with Tehran and Damascus at the most senior levels. With both governments, the result has been a nearly unbroken series of diplomatic failures dating back to Jimmy Carter's presidency." ”

From Talking to the rogues, by The Washington Times editorial board (*The Washington Times*, November 30, 2006) (view)

“ “Someone, please explain something to me: How does it follow that, because Islamic cultures reject democracy, we somehow need to talk to Iran and Syria? What earthly logic that supports talking with these Islamic terrorists would not also support negotiating with al Qaeda — a demarche not even a Kennedy School grad would dare propose? There’s none.” ”

From Can We Talk?, by Andrew C. McCarthy (*National Review*, November 29, 2006) (view)

“ “Proponents of "engaging" Iran and Syria argue that it's against their interests to see chaos next door. As opposed to what? They probably think they're better off today than they would be if they had a strong and potentially hostile Iraq on their border, especially one allied with the United States. They're happy to see the U.S. bled dry and Iraq immobilized as a regional player.” ”

From Iran and Syria aren't our friends in Iraq, by Max Boot (*Los Angeles Times*, November 29, 2006) (view)

“ “It would be an excellent thing to have direct negotiations with Iran, for instance, with all matters on the table. But if the mullahs did not have to sacrifice their ongoing nuclear deception in order to get to that table, then all the efforts of the Europeans, the United Nations, and the International Atomic Energy Agency to get them to do so would have been shown to be risible.” ”

From From Beirut to Baghdad, by Christopher Hitchens (*Slate*, November 27, 2006) (view)

“ “If political “realism” is about interests, then realists must prove that a country that has ignored successive UN resolutions demanding Syrian non-interference in Lebanon could somehow be a force for stability in Iraq, to which it has funnelled hundreds of foreign fighters. Engaging Mr Assad over Iraq will mean the gradual return of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon, since neither the US nor the UK will be in a position to deny Syria in Lebanon while asking favours in Iraq.” ”

From So how does 'engaging with Syria' look now?, by Michael Young (*The Times*, November 23, 2006) (view)

“ “Yesterday's cold-blooded assassination of a prominent anti-Syrian official in Lebanon should be all the answer that's needed to the growing international clamor for the Bush administration to reach out and talk to Damascus.” ”

From Dealing From Weakness, by New York Post editorial board (*New York Post*, November 22, 2006) (view)

“ “What our adversaries in the Middle East want from us is very simple: They want us out. Unless we are prepared to withdraw, not just from Iraq but from the entire region, and from elsewhere as well, we had better start figuring out how to pursue effectively--realistically--our interests and goals. This is true American realism. All the rest is a fancy way of justifying surrender.” ”

From Surrender as 'Realism', by Robert Kagan, William Kristol (*The Weekly Standard*, November 22, 2006) (view)

“ "When we were having trouble in Bosnia, why didn't we ask for help from neighborly Serbia? When we were trying to help El Salvador democratize, why didn't we ask for help from the Sandinistas? When Kennedy was having trouble with Cuba, why didn't he ask for help from the USSR? The only alternative to the surrenders on offer by the Democrats and by the "realist" Republicans is a renewed determination to win." ”

From Iraq, by Mona Charen (*National Review*, November 17, 2006) (view)

“ "Talkers dominate Washington, but the world is changed by doers. At present, the doers are on the side of our enemies. Negotiations have no power to fix Iraq or the greater Middle East. The series of debacles ahead, from Beirut to Baghdad and from Tel Aviv to Tehran, is going to prove just that. Again." ”

From Talk is Cheap, by Ralph Peters (*New York Post*, January 17, 2007) (view)

“ "No one was more pleased with Chamberlain's diplomacy than Hitler, for it proved that Germany was in the saddle, riding the democracies -- that the momentum was with Berlin, while London and Paris were flailing. The Baker panel's recommendations will bring similar satisfaction to Tehran and Damascus." ”

From The danger of engaging with the enemy, by Jeff Jacoby (*The Boston Globe*, December 6, 2006) (view)

“ "Iran and Syria have an overriding interest in chaos in Iraq -- which is precisely why they each have been abetting the insurgency and fanning civil war. Perhaps in some long-term future they will want a stable Iraq as a tame client state of the Syria-Iran axis. For now they want chaos. What in God's name will a negotiation with them yield?." ”

From This Is Realism?, by Charles Krauthammer (*The Washington Post*, December 1, 2006) (view)

Mixed on this position

“ "While talks with Tehran and Damascus are unlikely to achieve very much, we have no objection in principle to the idea of talking to these governments. After all, to paraphrase Henry Kissinger, it makes little sense to talk only with people that we agree with. The real question is whether expanding dialogue with either of these governments is likely to yield peace or freedom in Iraq" ”

From What kind of rogue-state dialogue?, by The Washington Times editorial board (*The Washington Times*, November 22, 2006) (view)

“ " So, while talking with Damascus and Tehran could achieve some results in Iraq, it will most likely come at a very high price. Neither Iran nor Syria is going to do anything for nothing, after all." ”

From Baker's Iraq Advice: Too High a Price, by Peter Brookes (*New York Post*, December 4, 2006) (view)

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