

the State of Israel, an island of democracy in that part of the world. We have very strong ties there, as we should. Correspondingly, Europe has had very strong ties with the Palestinian people through the years. It goes way back. Significant portions of their population have ties to that region. So a NATO peacekeeping force comprised of both the military units from the European nations and some, I would say, proportionate amount of American forces would be perceived as a balanced force and could come, in my judgment, and provide a sense of security to support such frameworks of peace and accords as these two nations could hopefully achieve with our help and the help of other nations.

Again, it would only be at the invitation of the two Governments, but I think it is a concept that I have addressed on this floor many times. Others have likewise; indeed, some prominent journalists whom I respect. I do hope that it be given consideration.

General Jones in his testimony yesterday said it has been brought up in the North Atlantic Council of recent. Other nations are interested in this concept, and I hope our Nation, the United States, can get behind and explore the options.

I thank the distinguished Senator from Kentucky.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, how much time remains in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 25½ minutes remaining.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 256

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes the bankruptcy legislation, there be 20 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote or in relation to the Feingold amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRIP TO EUROPE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I, along with others, had an opportunity yesterday to get a briefing from the President about his trip to Europe. It was a bipartisan group, well attended, and everyone was quite interested in getting the President's views of the results of his trip.

It is clear that the Iraqi election has transformed the political landscape, not only in the Middle East but in Europe as well.

First in the Middle East, we have witnessed in the last few months the election in Afghanistan on October 9, the election in the Palestinian territories on January 9. We have witnessed the Rose revolution up in Georgia, the Orange revolution in Ukraine. Then we have had the election in Iraq. And in

the post-Iraq period, we have seen people take to the streets in Lebanon.

It is clear with the unified message from the French and the Americans that the international community wants, at long last, Syrian troops out of Lebanon—entirely out, not just the troops but the security forces as well—so that the Lebanese elections this spring can be uninhibited by foreigners.

All of this is going on, and added to that we have the President of Egypt saying they are going to have a real election. That has certainly not been the case in Egypt in the past. A real election presumably means real choices with the opposition allowed to speak, participate, and run for office.

We have even seen some elections in Saudi Arabia, though women are not yet allowed to vote. That is a step obviously in the right direction.

What is happening here? I think the Iraqi policy of the President of the United States is transforming the Middle East and transforming European attitudes toward America and the policy in the Middle East. The President's trip last week I think underscores that.

He had unanimous support from NATO, all 26 countries, to do something within their capability to help the Iraqi emerging democracy. The French want to help. The Germans want to help. This is an enormous transformation in Europe, as well as in the Middle East. All of this, I would argue, is a result of the extraordinarily effective war on terror and particularly the Afghanistan and Iraqi chapters.

The President's grand strategy is not just to protect us at home—and that has worked so far; since 9/11 they have not been able to hit us again—but through these policies of transformation, he sort of drained the swamp and made it likely that the kinds of people who tend to join up with these terrorist groups will feel a sense of hopelessness in their own countries because they do not have a chance to influence outcomes and determine their own governments and their own fates.

This is an incredible step in the right direction. Clearly, problems remain, and at the top of the list would have to be Iran and North Korea. With regard to Iran, the President is pursuing a multilateral policy in which the British, the Germans, and the French engage the Iranians, hoping to convince them to follow the policy chosen by Muammar Qadhafi, for example, in Libya, witnessing what happened to Saddam Hussein in Iraq, deciding it would be better to give up weapons of mass destruction and work his way back toward being part of the community of civilized nations. The Europeans hopefully will make that point to the Iranians, and we are looking forward to pursuing a very aggressive policy. Everyone in Europe agrees that a nuclear Iran is simply not an option.

While we do have growing areas of agreement with our European allies,

there are some differences. As the Senator from Virginia pointed out, we are not happy about the apparent decision of the European community to trade with China in possibly missile technology or other military equipment that could potentially destabilize Asia and raise the anxiety of the Japanese, for example, and ourselves and exacerbate the cross-straits problem between China and Taiwan. So we do have our differences with the Europeans on that.

The President made it clear that in addition to the public meetings he had with President Putin of Russia, privately he also aggressively emphasized the importance of Russia continuing in a democratic direction and the importance of not unraveling the democratic reforms of the early 1990s if Russia is going to be a place where foreign investment will be willing to go. If there is not a respect for the rule of law and not a free press, not the kind of atmosphere in which one can function, the chances of Russia realizing its aspirations will be significantly set back if President Putin continues down the path he has chosen.

The new Ukrainian President was there. It was very exciting for all of the 26 NATO members to have an opportunity to see this hero. His opponents tried to kill him, and he is still in the process of trying to recover from the poisoning that almost took his life. It was remarkable to see the Ukrainian people take to the streets and demand an honest election, get an honest election, and elect someone who is westward leaning and who wants to bring the Ukraine into the European community and make it a country that can advance the hopes, desires, and aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

Finally, the President indicated he had an extraordinary, uplifting experience in Slovakia. He said he was standing there in the square speaking to the Slovakian people, and he said the best evidence that they have a genuine democracy was that one fellow had a sign up with some kind of anti-Bush comment on the sign. The President said the man stood there quietly holding up his sign during all of the President's speech, and the President pointed out that that was a further illustration that in Slovakia they are free to speak their mind and peacefully protest. The President thought that was a good sign of the stability and effectiveness of the new Slovakian democracy. By the way, that is a country that is making remarkable progress, which is, I am sure, the reason the President chose to go there.

I conclude by saying that President Bush clearly had a good week, and the reason he had a good week is because he has been pursuing policies that are working. Democracy is breaking out, springing up, taking root all through the Middle East, and the Europeans look at that and have to conclude that whether or not they supported the Iraq war initially, that single decision to liberate Iraq could well be the turning