When it comes to peacemaking, Abba Eban said after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Arabs "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Nonetheless, the Israeli diplomat retained some optimism. "History teaches us," he added, "that men and nations only behave wisely once they have exhausted all alternatives."

Eban's observations may apply to the United States as well. After decades of mistakes and missed opportunities, Stephen Kinzer claims, America can help stabilize the Middle East by recasting its relationships with Israel and Saudi Arabia, building an ever-closer partnership with Turkey, and nurturing the democratic potential of Iran.

Kinzer's *Reset* is at once a stern critique of American foreign policy and a concise, colorful and compelling modern history of Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel. A former journalist for *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, Kinzer is a masterful storyteller. His cast of characters leaps off the page. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, he writes, was a dandy who wore crepe de Chine underwear, a boozier and compulsive womanizer who numbered Zsa Zsa Gabor among his conquests. He was also a widely read, worldly, secular master strategist, who as president of Turkey closed down Muslim schools. A rare breed of autocrat, Ataturk "built institutions, faded gracefully from power, and set his country on the path to liberation."

In proposing a "grand strategy" for the Middle East, Kinzer makes a conscious effort to push America beyond "old policies, old alliances and old assumptions." The endgame between Palestinians and Israelis, he asserts hyperbolically, "is clear to all": the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state with its capital, like Israel's, in Jerusalem; the right of all Palestinians to return to their homeland and be compensated for the land they lost; and a pledge by all states in the region to settle disputes peaceably. Convinced that a settlement "cannot emerge from within," he wants the United States to impose this plan on the warring parties.

More important — and well worth a hearing — is the core premise of this timely book. Because Turkey and Iran have "developed an understanding of democracy and a longing for it," Kinzer makes a compelling case that "they'll make good soul mates" for the United States, and that, if they're willing to learn the lessons of history, the architects of American foreign policy will discover that the road to peace in the Middle East runs through Ankara and Tehran, not Jerusalem.