Washington Institute Principles

These principles have been the bedrock of our research and programming for many years...

1. We are an American-interest think tank, in the business of advancing U.S. national interests in the Middle East.

We are not a lobby for any foreign power, we don’t advocate for any foreign government, and won't perform “special pleading” for a foreign country. We are so committed to this principle that — unlike virtually every other foreign policy research organization in Washington — we refuse to accept donations from any foreign source, including governments, corporations, foundations, or individuals. We only accept contributions from U.S. citizens and institutions. This gives us special standing to state that we are acting solely in the U.S. national interest.

2. We believe a strong U.S.–Israel relationship advances U.S. interests in the broader Middle East.

As important as America’s friendship with Israel may be for historical, emotional, cultural, and idealistic reasons, we believe that this strategic partnership is also an essential element of U.S. national interest in the Middle East. Israel is an anchor of stability in the eastern Mediterranean and a critical partner with the United States in multiple arenas, from the fight against terrorism to the battle against nuclear proliferation. Our advocacy of a strong U.S.–Israel relationship is not a favor to Israel; we believe it is in the best interest of America.

3. We are convinced that the key division in the Middle East is not Arab versus Israel but rather Radical versus Moderate.

Viewing the region through the first prism sets up a zero-sum game that does not reflect political realities; viewing the region through the second prism provides an accurate reflection of on-the-ground politics, where the region is divided between a radical camp (Shiite Persian Iran, Alawite Syria, Shiite Arab Hizbollah, and Sunni Arab Hamas) and a largely Sunni bloc in practical cooperation with Israel. That analysis opens up vistas of opportunity for promoting peace and security throughout the region.
...allowing us to pursue these three other pillars of our operation.

1. **We are nonpartisan.**

   The Washington Institute does not engage in partisan debate and seeks to work with both major U.S. political parties — especially their foreign policy specialists — to advance U.S. interests in the region. One visible reflection of this operational pillar is the fact that five former secretaries of state serve on our Board of Advisors: Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, George Shultz, Lawrence Eagleburger, and Warren Christopher.

2. **We are engaged.**

   Unlike some organizations whose fortunes are tied to the electoral success of a particular political party, we believe that the stakes in the Middle East are too high for us to be tethered to the electoral cycle. While we would enjoy unusually good access to senior policymakers when “our team” wins, we would be in the political wilderness when “our team” loses, and that is simply unacceptable. Instead, we have built a model of consistent engagement with the powers-that-be, whether Democratic or Republican, so that our voices are heard in the corridors of power no matter which party is ascendant.

3. **We are not involved in Israeli politics, either.**

   The importance of maintaining relevance stretches to our engagement with Israeli political leaders, too. It is not our job to tell Israeli voters whom to elect; it is our job to work with the U.S. government to advance the cause of peace and security with any Israeli government. This principle has kept doors open to us in Israel under every prime minister for the past twenty-five years.